A

SERIES

OF

LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO

SOAME JENYNS, Esq;

ON OCCASION OF

HIS VIEW

OF THE

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

By A. MACLAINE, D. D.
Minister of the English Church at the Hague.

Non tali auxilio - - - VIRGIL.

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QUOTATION

BY WAY OF

PREFACE.

THE miſtaken principles of one Chriſtian Writer have been detected and expoſed by other Chriſtian Writers without reſerve. But infidels, indiſſolubly leagued together by the ſingle tie of unbelief, ſtudiouſly avoid confuting one another: this conduct ſhews a determined reſolution to ſupport a beloved cauſe by *all poſſible* means; and the cauſe, which inſpires its votaries with *ſuch* a reſolution, is not likely to be the *cauſe of truth.*

GERARD's *Diſſert. on Chriſt.* p. 354.

Hague, &c.

LETTER I.

To SOAME JENYNS, Esq.

SIR,

YOUR *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* had passed through four editions, before it came to my hands. My distance from the place of publication, and some other circumstances, prevented my meeting with it sooner; though my zeal for the cause it maintains, and the well-acquired fame of its author, had rendered me impatient to be acquainted with its contents. I

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had been told that your Defence of Chriſtianity was *new*; and, when the Book arrived, I found it to be ſo, with a witneſs: for, though ſome of theſe novelties had appeared in the writings of a ſingular and excentric Genius upon the Continent, it remains ſtill dubious, whether they were deſigned, by him, to do honour to Chriſtianity, or to undermine its credit. And indeed, Sir, I muſt own, that I had read two thirds of *your* Book, before I knew whether I ſhould place it on the ſame ſhelf with the Treatiſe of Gilbert Weſt, or certain Writings of Samuel Chubb; and I begin theſe Letters by begging your pardon for having ſuſpended, during ſome moments of a diſagreeable uncertainty, the juſtice that is due to your upright intentions.—An accidental circumſtance put me in a mood

that

that contributed not a little to the injury I was likely to do you. I had been reading the account, given by Mr. Edward Gibbon, of the Progreſs of the Chriſtian Religion; in which the graveſt ſubject, and one of the graveſt kinds of writing, are both diſhonoured by a perpetual and unneceſſary ſneer.* This had ſtruck me

* I ſay an *unneceſſary* ſneer, becauſe Mr. Gibbon lives in a country where a man may write and ſpeak as he thinks, without danger or moleſtation. He was, therefore, under no neceſſity of aping the manner of ſome of the French Philoſophers, (as they are pleaſed to call themſelves) who cover their infidelity with a ſedate and well-diſguiſed irony, to eſcape the ſecular arm of Religious perſecution.—It is true, a ſneer may have its place and time; but ſurely its *place* cannot be hiſtorical narrative, through which, at leaſt, it never ought to reign; nor is it a *time* to ſneer, when Chriſtianity is the ſubject of diſcuſſion, becauſe this Religion

ſo much, that, when I took up *your Book*, and ſaw the *ſtrange things* you were advancing in defence of Chriſtianity, I began to ſuſpect that *you* were ſneering alſo. This idea acquired a certain degree of probability from the many accounts I have had of your ſly wit, and your eaſy and elegant pleaſantry; it did not, however, ſquare ſo well with what I have alſo often heard of you, Sir, even that you poſſeſſed the happy and agreeable art of being *merry* and *wiſe*.

The peruſal of your whole Work diſpelled all my doubts. I perceived, at length, that you were in earneſt; but I began to apprehend, leſt that numerous claſs

ligion has a profeſſed relation to the moſt ſolemn and important intereſts, and has, in effect, been a ſource of conſolation and hope to the wiſeſt of mankind in all ages.

claſs of our common adverſaries, who are rather *practical* than *perſuaded* Infidels, ſhould, on perceiving the ſame thing, begin to be merry. The *honeſt* people of this claſs are never ſo rejoiced, as when they ſee an ill-judged defence of Chriſtianity. It makes them (I know not why, but the caſe is really ſo) go to the gaming-table with leſs reluctance, and to the ſcenes of lewdneſs with more tranquillity. They fooliſhly perſuade themſelves, that a cauſe, which is prepoſterouſly defended, muſt be a bad one; and, putting between conſcience and futurity this new reinforcement of illuſion, they return, with a new-fluſhed confidence, to enjoy as many moments of pleaſure, as they can, before the bubble of exiſtence breaks.

An illuſion of this kind, Sir, may be confirmed by your reputation, and the ſhining abilities you have diſcovered in treating other ſubjects.—For, if it ſhould appear, that, with all your genius and learning, you have defended Chriſtianity upon principles that lead (as men may be differently diſpoſed) to enthuſiaſm or to ſcepticiſm, many will be ready to conclude, that the Goſpel, and not you, is chargeable with theſe conſequences.

It is painful to me to aſſume the tone of cenſure and criticiſm, and that more eſpecially, where a perſon of your ſuperior merit and abilities is concerned; but I have the intereſt of Chriſtianity too much at heart, not to proteſt ſolemnly againſt your method of defending it. Your *view* of its Internal Evidence is certainly

certainly exceptionable in many reſpects. In general, your reaſoning is neither cloſe nor accurate. Your illuſtrations run wide of the principles they are deſigned to explain and enforce. One would be tempted ſometimes to think, that you, yourſelf, loſt ſight of *theſe* principles in the midſt of the deſultory detail of arguments and obſervations, which you bring to ſupport them; and, while we admire ſeveral fine touches of genius, wit and eloquence, that ſtrike us in the midſt of this ſplendid confuſion, we lament the want of that luminous order and philoſophical preciſion, that are indiſpenſably required in a work of this kind.—You look like a man who has been ſuddenly tranſported into a new ſcene of things, where a multitude of objects ſtrike him at once, and who begins

to deſcribe them, before he has had time to conſider their arrangement and their connexions. Or, to uſe another figure that comes nearer to your particular caſe, you look like a zealous and ſpirited volunteer, who has embarked in a veſſel, ſurrounded with enemies and aſſailed by tempeſtuous weather, and begins to defend and work the ſhip, without that experience in the art of Navigation, or the ſcience of Defence, that is neceſſary to enſure ſucceſs and victory.

I congratulate you, Sir, at the ſame time, upon your entrance into our *Ark*, which does not depend for the final iſſue of its courſe on *our* manœuvres. It is firmly and compactly built, though you and I may not conſider, under the ſame point of view, either the *principles* of its conſtruction

conſtruction or its various *tendencies*; and, in ſpite of the ſtorms of infidelity and vice, (which beat againſt it, and retire in froth) it will conduct us both, I hope, to that peaceful harbour, where tumult and diſorder ſhall ceaſe for ever.

This may ſuffice, Sir, for my firſt introduction to your acquaintance: in my following Letters I ſhall enter profeſſedly upon the examination of your Work, and conclude at preſent, by aſſuring you, that I am, with the moſt ſincere eſteem, for your virtues and talents, Sir,

Your moſt humble and

obedient Servant,

A. M.

LETTER II.

SIR,

ONE of the firſt things, that ſtruck me in your Work, is the Propoſition you advance, page 5, *viz.* "that the *credibi-* "*lity* of Miracles and Prophecies *depends* "upon the *internal marks* of Divinity "that are ſtamped upon the Chriſtian "Religion." This aſſertion, had it fallen from the pen of an ordinary Writer, would have paſſed without examination for a palpable error in reaſoning; but, coming from you, it carried a certain aſpect of authority that made me review the principles of Evidence; but thus I came, though without precipitation, to the ſame concluſion.

I ſhall

I ſhall not here obſerve, that you fall into, what the Logicians call, a vicious circle, while, after proving the Divinity of the Doctrine by miracles, you prove the credibility of miracles by the Doctrine. This inaccurate and confuſed manner of reaſoning you have in common with too many of the Defenders of Chriſtianity. I ſhall leave this conſideration aſide, and ſhew that miracles derive no *poſitive* proof at all from the nature of doctrines or precepts, or what we call the *internal* Evidence of a Religion.

Miracles are *facts* out of the common courſe of nature, and therefore can reſt upon no evidence but that of *teſtimony*, handed down from the *ocular* witneſſes in the *faithful* records of Hiſtory. Facts

Facts in the courſe of nature derive a certain degree of probability from analogy, and are thus rendered credible by obſervation and experience: but facts out of the courſe of nature, have no ſuch characters of credibility to ſupport them, and muſt therefore depend on teſtimony alone. What we call the internal marks of Divinity in the Goſpel give no credibility to miracles, properly ſpeaking; they only ſhew that the nature of the doctrines or precepts of a Religion *furniſh* no reaſon to make us *ſuſpect* that the miracles are falſe; they only prevent objections againſt them; they only hinder any proofs of their falſehood from coming from that quarter:—but this does not give them any degree of *poſitive* evidence. Nay, more,—if you can prove from the internal Characters

ters of the Chriſtian Religion, that its origin is *ſupernatural*, then miracles are uſeleſs; and, if uſeleſs, improbable, in conſequence of that known maxim, that *infinite Wiſdom does nothing in vain.* But indeed to a Deiſt, who demands ſtrict evidence, and will not put up with *ſentimental* arguments, you will not be able to prove from (what are commonly called) the *internal* characters of Chriſtianity, unſupported by miracles, that the origin of that Religion is ſupernatural. And from ſome of the internal characters, which *you*, Sir, attribute to Chriſtianity, I fear a dextrous adverſary might even form objections againſt its divine origin.

What I call, and what are generally called the *internal characters* of Chriſtianity, that diſplay its *excellence*, and, in conjunction

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conjunction with miracles, ſhew its *Divinity*, are—the *juſt*, *rational*, and *ſublime* repreſentations it gives of the attributes in general, and particularly of the goodneſs and mercy of the *Supreme Being*;—the *ſuitableneſs* of its *declarations* of mercy, grace, ſuccour, and immortality to the *guilt*, *infirmities*, and boundleſs *deſires* of the human mind;—the purity and ſublimity of its *moral precepts*, which are adapted to ennoble and improve human nature, and to lead it to true perfection and felicity;—and the *motives* that it exhibits to enforce the practice of univerſal virtue. Now what do theſe *internal* characters prove? This only; that ſuch a Religion, according to *our* conception of things, is *not unworthy* of God; or, in other words, that *we* ſee nothing in ſuch a Religion that is inconſiſtent

ſiſtent with *our* ideas of the Divine Nature and perfections. They prove no more, according to the plaineſt rules of Evidence. But to prove that a Religion is not *unworthy* of God (for any thing we know) is a very different thing from proving that it comes from him by an *immediate* and *ſupernatural* interpoſition.

Many things may appear *worthy* of God, in conſequence of our *general* conceptions of his goodneſs, which *that* allwiſe goodneſs (in conſequence of relations and connexions unknown to us, and of larger views of public utility than we can comprehend) may not think proper to effect. It would be conſiſtent with *our* notions of the Divine benignity, that the Indians were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, and that the

the immenſe Continent of Africa was inſtructed in the doctrines of celeſtial Wiſdom; but *he*, whoſe goodneſs is infinitely more pure, diſintereſted, and extenſive than *ours*, does not think fit to diſtribute his benignity in the *meaſure* and *time* that *we* would prefer.

We may transfer the ſame method of reaſoning to the internal Characters of a Religion. Theſe, conſidered *merely* in themſelves, * prove only the excellence of precepts and the *utility* of doctrines. They ſhew us, that theſe precepts and doctrines contain nothing that is unworthy

* I ſhall conſider in its place (for I chuſe to *ſtep* rather than *run* through this important ſubject) theſe internal Characters combined with the Characters and Capacities of the firſt Founder and Miniſters of the Goſpel; and *then* we ſhall ſee how *internal* Evidence is affected by *external*.

thy of our pureſt notions of the Supreme Being; and we may ſay the ſame thing of many of the precepts and reaſonings of Socrates and Cicero. But this does not prove that the Teachers of ſuch precepts and doctrines have received an *expreſs Commiſſion* from above to propagate them among men. This *Commiſſion* can be aſcertained by miracles *alone*. The pretenſions of theſe teachers to a Divine Commiſſion, though ſeconded by abundant marks of probity, candour, and benevolence, are not ſufficient to prove this Commiſſion. They may be *ſincere*, but *miſtaken*. The goodneſs of their intentions, and even the benevolent Warmth of their Zeal, may more or leſs deceive them in this matter. There are degrees of enthuſiaſm, which, though very remote from frenzy or diſordered reaſon, are

are nevertheleſs deluſive: and how can I be certain, that this is not the caſe with the Teachers in queſtion? This certainty can never be complete as long as I conſider *only* their doctrines and their moral characters. (The evidence, that will ariſe from conſidering their capacities, ſhall be conſidered preſently.) All that this point of view exhibits is reducible to the following propoſitions, which might be addreſſed to them even by a mind deſirous of believing: "Your precepts are excellent "*whatever* be the authority on which "you propagate them—Your promiſes "of pardon and immortality are tran-"ſporting—they anſwer the natural and "boundleſs deſires of the human mind; "but neither *theſe* circumſtances alone, "nor your ſincerity added to them, are "ſufficient to give me a *full perſuaſion* "of

" of *their* accompliſhment, or of your " Commiſſion to declare it. I ſee no " more than a poſſibility of this, until " the Being, who alone can *pardon* and " *vivify*, gives me ſome more expreſs " proof, that the accompliſhment of ſuch " promiſes are conformable to the gene- " ral plan of his Government, and that " thus both his wiſdom and power are " engaged to fulfil them."

I here conſider, Sir, the amount of internal Characters, as you only can make uſe of them againſt a Deiſt, and mean to ſhew you, that this uſe is only a negative one; that is, that it prevents objections *being raiſed* againſt miracles from the precepts and doctrines of Religion; but can give no *direct* or *poſitive* evidence in favour of the credibility of theſe miracles.

——What!

——What! (will you ſay) is it not *worthy* of God to confirm ſuch an excellent Religion by miracles? My anſwer is, that I have not been let into the ſecrets of the Divine Government, the perfect knowledge of which can only impower us to pronounce any procedure *worthy* or *unworthy* of his perfections. According to *my* view of things, it is not *unworthy* of the perfections of the Deity to confirm ſuch a Religion by miracles; and even *this* is ſomething: but I am too ignorant to pronounce abſolutely, that ſuch a confirmation is *worthy* of God, and that his perfections require it, until I ſee the miracles themſelves, or know by ſufficient Teſtimony that they have been performed. Inſtead, therefore, of ſaying, Sir, that the *credibility* of miracles *depends* upon the internal Characters of Chriſtianity,

Chriſtianity, you ought to have ſaid (if I am not much miſtaken) that *internal Characters* hinder the doctrines and precepts of the Goſpel from *jarring* with the concluſion deducible from miracles in favour of its *Divine* origin.

There is, Sir, I acknowledge, in the precepts, truths, and promiſes of the Goſpel, a kind of evidence of a Divine origin, that may be called *ſentimental*; but as this is relative to a certain caſt of mind, to certain degrees of feeling and ſenſibility, that are neither *univerſal*, nor *required in all*, we muſt not bring it, without the utmoſt caution, before the ſevere tribunal of Evidence. The conſequences of employing it would be dangerous; and though I ſhould grant that *this* is not a certain proof of its falſehood; yet

yet it is at leaſt a reaſon for uſing it ſparingly. There is no doubt but that, when the precepts, truths, and promiſes of the Goſpel, influence the heart, affections, and actions, they ennoble the *mind*, inſpire grand ideas of *its* Author and its deſtination, and excite that ſerene hope, that calm ſatisfaction, that ſenſe of dignity, and that anticipating impreſſion of future felicity, that none but the virtuous Chriſtian can feel: and there is no doubt but that *this ſtate* of mind is, to *him* that poſſeſſes it, a new ſource, or at leaſt a ſtrong re-inforcement of Evidence. It gives new ſtrength to all the proofs alleged in favour of Chriſtianity; it collects every ray of Evidence in the heart, and thus delightfully perſuades the virtuous Chriſtian, that Chriſtianity is the offſpring of Heaven, as well as the friend

of

of man. When the Chriſtian ſees the harmony that reigns between the truths, the precepts, and the promiſes of his Religion, and the grand ſcenes it opens beyond time—When he obſerves the candour of its Founders, the plainneſs of their ſtyle and manner, and yet the ſublimity of the views they unfold of the Counſels of the Deity; he *feels* that this Religion is Divine: he has an intimate conviction, that it is not the fruit either of error or of impoſture: the moral improvement, and the noble pleaſure it adminiſters to his heart, carry to that heart a ſentimental teſtimony of its truth.

But, after all: ſuppoſing (which I ſcarcely believe*) that ſuch a *ſentimental* perſuaſion

* Is this ſentimental perſuaſion in any heart totally independent of the belief that Chriſt roſe from the Dead?

perſuaſion of the Divinity of Chriſtianity could be obtained by a view alone of its internal Characters; yet this will not do againſt an Objector, who will tell you, that he has no ſuch *demonſtrative* feelings, and will conclude, perhaps from the ſtreſs laid on them, that Chriſtianity is *not founded in argument*. Preſent to him thoſe truths, precepts, and promiſes of the Goſpel, that excite ſuch feelings, and let us ſuppoſe that, in this ſyſtem of Religion, there are neither miracles, nor pretenſions to miracles.—What will he reply? He will reply, that Chriſtianity *is* excellent, but *not* Divine:—He will perhaps acknowledge, that Jeſus and his Apoſtles were among the Moraliſts what Archimedes and Newton were among the Mathematicians:—He will obſerve, that the precepts of Chriſt *may be* within the ſphere

ſphere of human Capacity, whoſe *degrees* are *various* in different perſons, and whoſe limits, even in this part of the great ſcale, it is ſo difficult to aſcertain.——And, as to the expreſs promiſes of *pardon* and *immortality*, the Objector will tell you, that they are yet *to be* accompliſhed, and that the certainty of that accompliſhment is only deducible from thoſe ſamples of power that were diſplayed by Chriſt, when he calmed the tempeſts, healed the ſick, aroſe from the dead, and ſent down upon his Church the Spirit of Wiſdom, Victory, and Power. It was then (will he ſay, and I think with truth) that Chriſt, properly ſpeaking, ſhewed his Divine Commiſſion.

If, indeed, we conſider the *internal* Characters of *excellence* and *ſublimity*,

 that

that are ſtamped upon the doctrines and precepts of the Goſpel, *in compariſon* with the *rank* and *capacities* of thoſe who promulgated them to the world, a contraſt will ariſe to our view that changes the nature of the argument. The apparent Son of a Jewiſh Carpenter dies upon the Croſs, by the hands of Perſecution: He leaves behind him, for his Diſciples, a few fiſhermen, and perſons in low life, remarkable for nothing, while he was with them upon earth, but profound ignorance, natural incapacity, dulneſs of apprehenſion, and erroneous views of their Maſter's doctrine, intentions, and kingdom. Now it is by theſe, *manifeſtly* ignorant, dull, and incapable perſons, that the ſublime doctrines and truths of the Goſpel are recorded and publiſhed. Here, I ſay, the tenor of the argument changes,

changes, and here the proof of a *ſupernatural* diſpenſation properly commences. Why?—Becauſe we have here a real miracle, and miracles alone are the *direct* proof of a Commiſſion *immediately* Divine: So that, the moment we conſider the internal nature of the Doctrines and Precepts of Chriſtianity, in compariſon with the Characters, Situation, and Capacities of the *Teachers* of this Religion, we have got a ſtep out of (what is commonly called the ſphere of internal Evidence, and find ourſelves in the ſphere of miracles. This compariſon leads us to Divine Inſpiration, which is a real miracle; and every miracle comes under the claſs of *external Evidence.*

The reſult of the matter then is, that, as the purity of the metal does not eſta-

bliſh its *true* and *permanent* value, nor aſſure its *currency*, before it be ſtamped externally with the mark of the Sovereign, ſo the intrinſic excellence of the Doctrines and Precepts of a Religion, though they may procure it certain marks of reſpect and attachment, and make it paſs for an uſeful rule of conduct, will not prove its Celeſtial origin, nor give it the authority of a Divine Revelation. The pure metal will have a certain degree of merit from its ſubſerviency to *ornament* or *utility*,—but there will be no *authoritative* obligation to make it an inſtrument of Commerce, nor can men be ſure that its value will be always real.

To ſpeak without figure or compariſon, the internal Characters of greatneſs, ſimplicity, utility, and importance, may ſhine

ſhine forth in a ſyſtem of Religion and Morality. That ſyſtem may be honourable to the Divine Perfections, for any thing we know to the contrary; it may tend to the real improvement of human nature, by its happy influence in teaching man humility, affording him conſolation, exciting in him hope, and pointing out the rule he ought to follow, and the mark to which he ſhould tend;—but all theſe marks of intrinſic excellence, unattended with viſible and extraordinary interpoſitions, may appear to many, as not beyond the reach and dictates of human Wiſdom; and the judgment of mankind may be various on this head, in proportion to their different degrees of ſagacity in diſcerning the marks and characters of truth.

Such is the caſe with what is commonly called the *internal Evidence* of the Chriſtian Religion—it is inſufficient to demonſtrate the Divinity of any Religion.

But, Sir, what you lay down, as internal proofs in favour of the Goſpel, are, if I am not miſtaken, ſomething worſe than inſufficient for this purpoſe; they would (were they really to be found there) rather turn to its diſcredit.——This I ſhall ſhew in a following Letter.

LETTER

LETTER III.

SIR,

THE Analogy of Revealed with Natural Religion, and the government of providence, was one of the facts which learned men have employed to remove the prejudices of ſober Theiſts againſt the Goſpel of Chriſt. It is one of the eſſential Characters of a *true* Revelation, that it be conformable with the purer dictates and eſſential principles of Natural Religion, and that it be not in contradiction with the fundamental principles of human knowledge.—Though it may *perfect* natural light, it muſt not *contradict* it; though it may unfold to

view *new* facts relating to our felicity and deſtination, yet all its Diſpenſations muſt carry a proportion to our preſent ſtate of being, and connect it with our future proſpects; and thus make the whole of our exiſtence a ſeries or chain, of which the firſt link is formed in ignorance and corruption, and the ſucceeding ones aſcend towards perfection and felicity. Without this method of proceeding, the work of God is neither uniform nor conſiſtent;—Nature and Grace are in contraſt and contradiction.—How *your* ideas of the Internal Characters of the Chriſtian Religion ſquare with this, I leave you to judge.

Your *ſecond propoſition* ſets the language of the Deity, in the Conſtitution of Nature, in a direct oppoſition with the

the language that is ſpoken in the Diſpenſation of Grace; a conceſſion which the Deiſt will turn againſt the latter with no ſmall advantage. If the Religion contained in the New Teſtament be, as you affirm, "*intirely new*, both with "regard to its object and doctrines, nay "TOTALLY *unlike every thing* which had "ever before entered into the mind of "man;" it can carry with it no degree of evidence, but what ariſes from Miracles alone, as it can bear no conformity with our natural faculties; nor can it find a foundation in thoſe primary notions and eſſential truths that are the principles of all knowledge and all evidence.

The *mere novelty* of a Doctrine is ſurely no proof, either of its Truth or Divine Origin: For, if it were, the fantaſtic

dreams of Enthuſiaſts would often put in a claim to a divine authority. The Goſpel is compoſed of *Facts*, *Doctrines*, *Precepts*, and *Promiſes*.——Novelty alone, proves neither the reality of the firſt, nor the truth of the ſecond, nor the obligation of the third, nor the certainty or future accompliſhment of the laſt. *Facts*, whether ordinary or miraculous, muſt be proved by Hiſtory; *Doctrines* and *Precepts* may be intrinſically uſeful and reaſonable, but their Divine Authority can only be demonſtrated by Miracles; and the certainty and accompliſhment of *Promiſes* and *Threatenings* reſt upon the ſame foundation. If, indeed, the Doctrines and Precepts of a Religion carry marks of ſublimity, depth, and excellence, diſproportioned to the capacities and abilities of the perſons by whom it

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is publiſhed to the world, *then* they bear the characters of a Divine Revelation; but *then*, Sir, they come under your fourth *Propoſition*, and your ſecond is totally inſignificant and uſeleſs, becauſe mere novelty bears neither the characters of truth nor of authority. Mere novelty does not prove (as you affirm it does, in your concluſion) that the Chriſtian Religion could not have been the work of man, or any ſet of men, &c.

But it happens, unluckily for your hypotheſis, that thoſe Characters of *intire novelty* are not really to be found in the Religion of the New Teſtament, as that Religion is generally underſtood by Chriſtians, or as even you yourſelf have thought proper to repreſent it; and thus your ſecond Propoſition turns out inſignificant in every point of view. The

The great and diſtinguiſhing Characters of the Goſpel are the *poſitive declarations* of mercy to the penitent, of ſuccour to the humble, and of life eternal to all ſincere Chriſtians, conveyed through the interceſſion, and ratified by the death and reſurrection of a Mediator. This pardoning Mercy, this gracious ſuccour, this eternal recompence to ſincere though imperfect obedience, are clearly revealed: they conſtitute the clear and eſſential articles of the Chriſtian Faith; and they adminiſter to man, in this feeble dawn, this infancy of his exiſtence, the richeſt ſource of conſolation, and the nobleſt incentives to virtue and moral improvement. Theſe Doctrines accompanied with a Moral Law pure and perfect, with the moſt ſublime repreſentations of the unity and perfections of the Supreme Being,

Being, and the moſt awful and ſtriking accounts of a judgment to come, which is to determine the felicity of the righteous, and cover impenitence with confuſion and miſery, make the ſum and ſubſtance of the Chriſtian Religion. Now, though all theſe objects are preſented to us in the New Teſtament with ſuch full and comfortable evidence as diſpels anxiety and doubt in an humble and candid mind, and with an intereſting aſſemblage of circumſtances, that confirm their certainty, and diſengage them from all the abſurdities and errors that accompany the conjectures of ſhort-ſighted mortals; yet it is not true to affirm, that they are *utterly unlike any thing that before had ever entered into the mind of man.* The hopes of mercy, founded on the clemency and placability of the Deity, or of inferior

ferior Beings, who were worſhipped as his Miniſters, appear to have taken place in almoſt all Religions; and, if the light of reaſon was capable of deducing from the Works of God any arguments in favour of his goodneſs, this muſt have led mortals to hope, at leaſt to conjecture, that ſupreme goodneſs would temper the ſeverity of (what we call) ſtrict juſtice, in favour of the penitent offender. I am the more inclined to entertain this opinion, when I conſider the notion which ſeveral eminent Sages of Antiquity ſeem to have had of the juſtice of God: they call it the *puniſhing branch or ſpecies of the Divine goodneſs*; and thus they came nearer to the true ſenſe of the term *Juſtice*, in its application to the Deity, than certain Theologians, who apply that term to the Supreme Being in the ſtiff, rigorous,

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Law-ſenſe, in which it is uſed at Guild-hall, or in the Old-Bailey. The Divine attribute of Juſtice is, certainly, in its primary and general ſenſe, no more than the *love of righteouſneſs and virtue*, and a propenſity to promote them; and in a ſecondary and more confined ſenſe, (or in ſome of its particular exertions) it denotes the union of wiſdom and goodneſs in the puniſhment of diſorder and vice, to repair evil where it could not be prevented.

The ſacrifices of the Heathen Religions were founded on this notion, whether it was derived from argument or tradition; and therefore it is not true, that the expreſs promiſe of pardon to the penitent, which is one of the diſtinctive Characters of the Chriſtian Religion, is *totally unlike every*

every thing which had before entered into the mind of man. The Goſpel, indeed, adminiſters here a much more ſolid foundation of comfort, than could be adminiſtered either by Natural Religion, or by human tradition; becauſe, notwithſtanding the propenſity of Divine goodneſs to pardon the penitent offenders of this globe, (which is deducible from reaſon) the ends of the Divine Government, and the general good of the univerſal ſyſtem, might (for aught that we could know with certainty) have demanded their puniſhment—and, as to human tradition, the uncertainty of its origin rendered it but a feeble ground of conſolation or hope. Thus the hopes of mortals were mixed with uncertainty; and, to the thinking mind, doubt about a matter that ſo eſſentially concerns us, as the pardon

don of ſin, muſt have produced anxiety. And this is the peculiar excellence of the Goſpel, that by a poſitive declaration, conveyed by a Celeſtial Envoy, it confirms the expectations that Nature ſuggeſted, and diſpels the fears of anxious mortals; and therefore is not *totally unlike* whatever entered into the mind of man with relation to this point.

The ſame may be ſaid of the expreſs promiſe of *ſuccour to the humble*, which is made in the Goſpel. It is analogous to the notions that were generally entertained by the wiſeſt Philoſophers of the Heathen World, with reſpect to the infirmities of human nature, and the neceſſity of a divine influence to ſuſtain the feeble ſteps of man in the paths of virtue. The ancient and modern Platoniſts

niſts aſſert the reality of this influence in numberleſs paſſages of their Writings; and what they advanced from the conjectures of reaſon has been happily confirmed by Divine Revelation.

With reſpect to the *Doctrine of Immortality*, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, you yourſelf, Sir, acknowledge, that it was taught by ſome of the Philoſophers of Antiquity, though mixed with much doubt and uncertainty; and thus you cannot ſay, that this eſſential and capital part of the Chriſtian Revelation was *totally unlike every thing which had ever entered into the mind of man.*

Nor is the morality of the Goſpel, though carried to a much higher point of purity and perfection, than even the ſci-

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ence of morals appeared in the beſt productions of the Pagan Sages, *totally unlike* what we find in the Writings of Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero; and as much may be ſaid of the Scripture Doctrines concerning the perfections of the Supreme Being.

Thus then it appears, that ſome of the *leading* and *fundamental* doctrines of Chriſtianity, as they are underſtood by the generality of the Chriſtian World, were delineated (indeed in a feeble and imperfect manner) in the opinions that were entertained relative to Religion and Morality in the times, that preceded the Goſpel. What, therefore, is *intirely new* in the Goſpel, is not, as you obſerve, its ſyſtem of Religion, but the particular nature, characters, and circumſtances of the

the Celeſtial Envoy, who taught, confirmed, and propagated this Divine Religion upon earth, by his Miniſtry while alive, and by his power, when he had been raiſed from the Croſs to everlaſting dominion.

But this, perhaps, you will not think ſufficient to invalidate your ſecond Propoſition; becauſe I have not taken *your* view of the Chriſtian ſyſtem into conſideration, in ſhewing that the doctrine of the Goſpel is *analogous*, inſtead of being *utterly diſſimilar* to all the notions of mankind, previous to its publication. I ſhall therefore now conſider *your* repreſentation of the Chriſtian Religion, and hope to convince you, that, even upon *its* baſis, your ſecond Propoſition does not hold true.

You

You affirm then, firſt, that "the *ob-* "*ject* of this Religion is *intirely new*, and "is *this:* to prepare us, by a ſtate of "probation, for the kingdom of Hea- "ven." And you affirm, that, "pre- "vious to the preaching of Chriſt and "his Apoſtles, no ſuch prize was ever "hung out to mankind, nor any means "preſcribed for the attainment of it."— To have reaſoned with preciſion, you ought, Sir, to have kept cloſer to the terms of your Propoſition, and ſaid, that a ſtate of probation for futurity was *totally unlike every thing, which had before entered into the mind of man.* However, as I cannot ſuppoſe that you deſigned to retract this Propoſition when you came to explain it, I ſhall, in diſcuſſing this point, keep to *thoſe* terms, which you have ſomewhat changed and ſoftened; though

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in reality, even with theſe modifications, the *Propoſition* is ſtill incapable of defence.

A *ſtate of probation* for a future ſcene was certainly one of the moſt natural conjectures that could enter into a reflecting mind, who believed a Deity, or Deities, and had any notions, however imperfect, of a moral Government in the Univerſe. It ſeems agreeable to the reaſon of things, that all rational Creatures whatſoever ſhould, for ſome time, be in a ſtate of trial, as we can ſcarcely, if at all, form a notion of a finite Being's arriving at either knowledge, or virtue, but by progreſſive obſervation, experience, and practice, proceeding from ſmall and imperfect beginnings. This idea is confirmed by what we obſerve of the proceedings of Providence in the Natural World.

World. Though Beings of different degrees of excellence are formed by creating wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, yet it is remarkable that the moſt excellent have their feeble beginnings, as well as thoſe of the loweſt order. The lofty Oak riſes gradually to its pre-eminence in the foreſt from a ſmall ſeed, as well as the moſt diminutive plant: In all the Orders of Being known to us, the *Law* of gradual improvement is the ſame, from a mite to a Newton; and it probably takes place in all ſpheres, from a Newton to the higheſt of finite Beings. Every thing in the nature, ſtate, and circumſtances of Man, in particular, adminiſters, to the moſt *ſuperficial* Obſerver, the ſtrongeſt intimations of this. A Nature, ſuſceptible of virtue or vice, as the influence of reaſon, or the impulſe of paſſions, predominate,

dominate, capable of being adorned with uſeful knowledge, or vilified by brutal ignorance, placed in a ſtate where a variety of objects, relations, and circumſtances, furniſhes the means of moral improvement or degradation; and thus ſuſceptible of high degrees of *well-being* or *ſuffering*. All this points out *trial* actually exiſting, a ſtate of probation, relative to ſome important end and purpoſe. This end and purpoſe cannot be only the improvement attainable in this preſent life; the improvement of our powers and faculties is ſcarcely arrived at any degree of perfection, the virtues, acquired by reflection and experience, have ſcarcely time to diſplay their energy and beauty, when we are called away from this tranſitory ſcene; and, if there were not one more exalted and happy to ſucceed it, the efforts

efforts and improvement of the virtuous and the wiſer part of mankind would be to no purpoſe. Now this view of the ſtate of man, as a Being capable of degrees of perfection, which none attain to in a preſent life, cut off from that life in the midſt of his progreſs, and (which is the caſe of the Virtuous) at the very time when he has acquired, by trial, the capacity of adorning and enjoying exiſtence in the beſt manner:—this view, I ſay, muſt have intimated to the wiſe and attentive Obſerver, in all ages, the notion of a future ſcene; where *enjoyment* will anſwer *improvement*, and improvement ſhall be carried to higher degrees of perfection. I don't mean, that this Concluſion would occur to the generality of mankind:—It might occur to the attentive Obſerver of nature, and the viſible

conſtitution of things; and that it did occur to many of the ancient Philoſophers, is evident from their writings.

It is true, there has been much learned duſt raiſed in the controverſy between ſome late Writers about the Opinions of the Ancients in relation to the *immortality of the ſoul*, and a *future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments*. It is, however, agreed on all ſides, that *both* were taught by the Philoſophers, and embraced by the people. And, though it ſhould be granted that ſeveral Philoſophic ſects did not believe any thing more than the immortality of the ſoul, and its *infuſion* into the common Eternal Principle, or τὸ ἓν and only taught the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, on account of its influence on the happineſs and order of

of civil ſociety; what then? This is no more a proof, that all the Philoſophers of antiquity diſbelieved this doctrine, or taught it only with political views, than the Deiſm of ſeveral of our modern Sages, and perhaps of ſome of our modern Prieſts, will be a proof to Poſterity, that Chriſtianity was not believed in Europe in the eighteenth Century.—Beſides, it is evident, that, generally ſpeaking, the Infidelity of the Philoſophers rather regarded the fabulous accounts of the Poets, and the abſurd notions of the vulgar, with reſpect to the nature, place, and manner of future rewards and puniſhments, than the reality of theſe rewards and puniſhments.

Now it is evident, that future rewards and puniſhments, in their very nature,

 imply

imply a previous ſtate of probation and trial, in which the Virtuous run a race, encounter difficulties, and overcome temptations to obtain the prize. And, ſuppoſing the notions of this ſtate of probation and theſe conſequent rewards ever ſo imperfect, and blended with ever ſo many abſurdities and errors; and granted, (which we muſt do) that they were rather objects of probable conjecture, than of perfect certainty; it ſtill remains a groundleſs and indefenſible Propoſition to aſſert that the ſtate of probation, as it is deſcribed in the Goſpel, is *totally unlike any thing that had ever before entered into the mind of man*, or is a Doctrine *intirely new*.

And, indeed, Sir, all your illuſtrations of this *ſecond Propoſition* either ſhew that you

you forgot its ſtrict contents, or that you were ſenſible of its weakneſs. For, in theſe Illuſtrations, * you only ſhew that Chriſtianity has great advantages over the doctrines of the ancient Philoſophers, both in its direct and ultimate end, and in the excellence of the means it employed for its attainment; and this is undeniable, but it does not prove what your Propoſition announced.

Is it poſſible then, that the notion of this ſtate's being a ſtate of probation ſhould never have entered into the mind of man, when, as you tell us yourſelf, "this notion is confirmed by every thing "which we ſee around us—that it is the "only key, which can open to us the "deſigns of Providence in the œconomy

* Page 21, 22, 23. 4th Edit.

" of human affairs, the only clue that " can guide us through that pathleſs " Wilderneſs, and the only plan on which " this world could poſſibly have been " formed, or on which the Hiſtory of it " can be comprehended or explained."

The next thing you mention, in proof of your *ſecond Propoſition*, is, that " the " Doctrines of this Religion are equally " new with the object." To prove this, inſtead of pointing out theſe Doctrines with order, and defining them with preciſion, you give us the following miſcellaneous bundle of vague aſſertions: " The Doctrines of this Religion (ſay " you) contain ideas of *God*, of *Man*, of " the *preſent* and a *future* life, totally " unheard of, and quite diſſimilar from " any which had ever been thought on, " previous

" previous to its publication." As yet we have only aſſertion.—Where are your proofs?—Of the four objects, with reſpect to which you maintain that the Doctrines of the Goſpel are new and unheard of, you begin with the two laſt, contrary to all method, and tell us, * that " no " other (Religion) ever drew ſo juſt a " portrait of the *worthleſſneſs* of this " world, and *all* its purſuits, nor exhi- " bited ſuch *diſtinct*, *lively*, and *exquiſite* " pictures of the joys of another, of the " Reſurrection of the dead, the laſt Judg- " ment, and the Triumphs of the Righ- " teous in that tremendous day."

Here, again, we have ſtill aſſertions, and no proof; and even your aſſertions are ſtrangely expreſſed. " Pray, worthy

* Page 27.

Sir, what do you mean by the *worthleſſneſs* of this world?" The term to me appears neither *philoſophical* nor *theological*, nor *clear*; it even ſavours of invective and ill humour; or, at beſt, ſuppoſes the object to which it is applied diveſted of every kind of excellence and merit. The world, phyſical and moral, is the only object from whence we derive the knowledge and proofs of the exiſtence and perfections of a Supreme Being; and ſurely, in this point of view, it cannot be a *worthleſs* world.—The world again, amidſt all its imperfections, exhibits noble ſcenes of beauty and grandeur, harmony, and order; rich materials for the acquiſition of uſeful and delightful knowledge; and many ſources of pleaſure and enjoyment, ſuited both to our inferior and more refined faculties and powers;

powers;—in this ſecond point of view, it is not ſurely a *worthleſs* world,—and farther; ſtill, the world is (as you ſay and I too) a ſtate of trial and probation for nobler ſcenes of Being in futurity;—and, as this is an appointment of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, it cannot be in this ſenſe that you conſider our globe as a *worthleſs* world; for this would be contradicting what you had before advanced. —If, by the *worthleſſneſs* of the world, you mean that its external advantages are tranſitory in their duration, incapable of ſatisfying the deſires, or completing the felicity of a rational and immortal Being; that they are mixed with diſappointments, perils, pain, ſuffering, and various ſources of diſtreſs; that folly and vice, in various forms, are interſperſed with pretty certain appearances of wiſ-

dom and virtue;—if you mean this,—all this is true; but even then the expreſſion is harſh, and the Doctrine is not new nor peculiar to the Goſpel. The obſervation and experience of mankind, in all ages, have rendered this truth palpable, and the complaints and ſighs of the human race have ever been abundant on this ſubject, nay—perhaps, exaggerated.

As to what you call the *diſtinct*, *lively*, and *exquiſite* pictures of the joys of a future world, of the Reſurrection of the dead, and a laſt Judgment, that are drawn in the Goſpel;—they will not detain us long. They are indeed infinitely ſuperior to the fictions of the Poets, and the notions of the Philoſophers of ancient times; but this does not prove that *they are*

are totally unlike every thing of that kind that had before entered into the mind of man; and this they ought to be, in order to ſerve as examples of the truth of your ſecond Propoſition.—In ſpeaking of theſe pictures, you employ the terms *diſtinct*, *lively*, and *exquiſite*; the two latter terms are proper,—for the pleaſures of futurity are deſcribed in Scripture in terms moſtly metaphorical, that they might be proportioned to our preſent mode of conception; but a *diſtinct* account of theſe pleaſures has been withheld by the ſacred Writers for the wiſeſt reaſons. *It does not yet appear*, ſays an inſpired Apoſtle, *what we ſhall be*; and another Apoſtle, who, favoured beyond the lot of Mortality, obtained a tranſitory ſight of the inviſible World, declared, that the things he perceived there were *unutterable*. All

that

that we can collect from the literal expreſſions of the ſacred Writers, on this ſubject, is, that our knowledge and benevolence ſhall be increaſed and purified from every mixture of error and malignity, and that ſin and ſuffering ſhall have no place in thoſe happy Regions. This is ſurely a great deal :—but the Declaration is general, communicates no *new* ideas with reſpect to all the *particulars* of future enjoyments; and you know, Sir, that particulars alone conſtitute *diſtinct* and *adequate* ideas. The Figures and Parables, employed to repreſent the Kingdom of Heaven, give us reaſon to expect ſomething very great and glorious in a future ſcene, but leave us in the dark about the place, manner, objects, connections, and other circumſtances of an intereſting kind. Our bleſſed Saviour,

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in his Parables of the *Talents*, ſeems to repreſent it as an active ſtate, but gives no intimation of the objects on which this activity ſhall be employed.—The Apoſtles repreſent it under the general notion of *reward*, under the compariſon of *ſeed-time* and *harveſt*;—and, if St. John, in the Revelations, deſcends ſometimes into a ſeeming detail of particulars, yet, undoubtedly, theſe are no more than allegorical viſions deſigned to intimate the ſublime ſcenes of future Glory, of which the images uſed by the Apoſtle are intended to give us only a general and confuſed idea, which is, however, adapted to excite delightful hopes. Any thing that we can conclude about theſe matters is from the probable conjectures of Reaſon, from ſome feeble concluſions founded in analogy; and ſurely no words could

could be more proper to ſhew us that the ſacred Writers never intended to convey *diſtinct* ideas of the Celeſtial felicity, than thoſe of the Apoſtle to the Corinthians, (if his words relate to a future ſtate) when he ſaid, *Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.* 1 Cor. ii. 9. You quote this paſſage in another place, and tell us, that "it *deſcribes* ſublimely "the future joys reſerved for the Righ-"teous, by declaring, that *they are ſupe-"rior to all deſcription*,"—whether this be a Bull or an Epigram, I ſhall not decide; but it ſhews that we muſt not look upon it as one of the *peculiarities* of the Goſpel, that it deſcribes *diſtinctly* the future felicities of the Righteous *.

You

* The truth of the matter is, that the Text here

You muſt not, however, imagine that I mean here to diminiſh the encomiums due to the Goſpel on this head; for, on the contrary, theſe imperfect notices of the *particular circumſtances* of our future felicity are evident marks of the Divine Wiſdom. If this felicity were *diſtinctly* repreſented, it muſt have been deſcribed in its progreſſive growth through an endleſs duration; but how render ſuch a deſcription intelligible to mortals? The object

here mentioned was not deſigned by the Apoſtle to deſcribe, either *diſtinctly* or *indiſtinctly*, the joys and felicity of a future World, but to ſhew that the Chiefs and Leaders of the Jews, whom the Apoſtle calls (in the verſe preceding) the *Princes of this World*, had no notion of the ſcheme, the nature, the intention, and end of the Goſpel Diſpenſation. For, if they had had any true conception of this, they *would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.*

object is quite diſproportioned to our faculties. The Infant, in the Cradle, might as eaſily comprehend the pleaſures and occupations of active youth, and the plans and enjoyments of maturer years, as we (in this feeble dawn of exiſtence, in which our views, even of the objects that ſurround us, are confuſed and inadequate) could underſtand a deſcription of the Celeſtial happineſs: for this happineſs may be founded upon new inlets of perception and ſenſation, new aſpects of love and benevolence, new modifications of a material frame, of which neither *Locke*'s five *external* Senſes, nor *Hutcheſon*'s eight or nine *internal* ones, will qualify us to entertain any, the moſt diſtant notion.

Nay—were it *poſſible* to convey a

diſtinct

diſtinct idea of the future felicity of Chriſtians, it would not be *expedient*. It would pour upon our feeble eye-balls a blaze of light that would dazzle and confound them;—it would fill the mind with an aſtoniſhment that would overpower all its faculties;—it would ſuſpend our attention to ſome of the moſt eſſential relations and duties of life, and defeat, in many reſpects, the purpoſes of the ſtate of probation in which we are placed;—it would, at leaſt, render our preſent condition diſagreeable, and all our temporal enjoyments inſipid.

It is therefore, in my opinion, an evidence, I will not ſay of the Divine Miſſion, but of the Wiſdom of the Goſpel-Writers that they have not pretended, any more than their Maſter, to give *diſ-*

tinct

tinct ideas of future felicity. The Philoſophers and Poets of antiquity, and the more modern Apoſtles of Mahomet and Odin, have given much more circumſtantial deſcriptions of *a* future ſtate, than the Chriſtian Writers;—but they are falſe and extravagant.

There is ſomething, indeed, diſtinguiſhing and peculiar in the Scripture doctrine of the Reſurrection of the Body;—this is a doctrine truly unknown to the ancient Sages, and it was delivered to the World by Divine Revelation, before the diſcoveries of corporeal transformations in the animal world had adminiſtered a preſumption drawn from analogy in favour of this Doctrine. But we have already ſhewn that novelty alone does not prove either the truth or Divine Origin

Origin of any doctrine, and the Reſurrection of the Body muſt reſt upon a promiſe, aſcertained to be Divine by a miraculous Teſtimony.

I proceed, however, to ſhew, that even the Doctrines you allege as illuſtrations of your *ſecond Propoſition* don't even bear the marks of that intire novelty you attribute to them.—I don't think myſelf obliged to examine the truth of what you advance, p. 27, where you tell us, that "no other Religion has ever repreſented "the Supreme Being in the Character of "three Perſons united in one God;" becauſe, in a note on this paſſage, you have declared it improper and unneceſſary to decide what *kind* of union this is. Many learned Men have pretended to find a Trinity in the Divine Eſſence clearly expreſſed

expreſſed in the ſacred Books of the Chineſe, Perſians, Chaldeans, Egyptians and Grecians: (not to ſpeak of the Writings of the old Teſtament, whoſe Declarations on this head I ſuppoſe you blend with thoſe of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles:) Thus Plutarch tells us, that the Perſian Oromaſdes *thrice augmented*, or *triplicated* himſelf, De Iſide & Oſir, and the Perſian Magi celebrate, to this very Day, a ſolemn feſtival in honour of the Τριπλάσιος, or *Threefold* Mythras. It appears, moreover, from the teſtimonies of learned Men, that what the Perſians called *Oromaſdes*, *Mythras*, and *Mythra*, were called by the Chaldeans *Life*, *Intellect*, and *Soul*; by the Chineſe *Hi*, *Yi*, and *Ouei*; by the Egyptians *Eicton*, *Emeph*, and *Ptha* *; and the Hebrews *Ab*, *El*, and *Ruach*.

* The Egyptians, according to the teſtimony of

Ruach. It is alſo well known that Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato had like ideas of a Divine Trinity. How far this *Tri-union* reſembled what you repreſent as the Chriſtian Doctrine on that ſubject, I cannot determine; becauſe you have not thought it expedient to tell us whether you conſider the unity of the three Perſons in one God, as an Unity of Counſel, Equality, or Eſſence; but it is evident, that the tenets of Eaſtern Nations, above-mentioned, are far from being *totally unlike* the Doctrines of the Trinity * in

of Damaſcius, looked upon theſe three Hypoſtaſes *as one Eſſence* incomprehenſible, above all knowledge, and praiſed him under the name of Darkneſs, *thrice repeated.*

* If it is alleged, that this Doctrine of a Trinity was derived, by Tradition, from ſome Antediluvian

in our Theological Syſtems; and they are ſufficient to prove your precipitation, in aſſerting, that no other Religion, except the Chriſtian, "has even repreſent-"ed the Supreme Being in the Charac-"ter of Three Perſons united in one "God." Nay were it demonſtrated, that the notions of a Trinity, which are to be found in the Theological Syſtems of the Pagan Sages, were derived from ſome primitive

diluvian Revelation; then the Doctrine is not peculiar to Chriſtianity.—And beſides, where are the proofs of this Tradition? We ſee, every day, into what crude fancies learned Men are betrayed by inveſtigations of this kind, where the traces are ambiguous and uncertain: we are greatly in the dark about the origin of many opinions, which various circumſtances, unknown to us, may have contributed to propagate. Thank Heaven! the Divine Authority of the Chriſtian Religion does not depend on any diſcuſſions of this kind.

primitive Revelation, Judaical, or Patriarchal, yet their being previous to the Chriſtian Revelation is ſtill ſufficient to invalidate your argument, unleſs you think fit to change the Title of your Book, and call it *A View of the internal Evidence* not only *of Chriſtianity*, but alſo *of Judaiſm* and *every other Revelation*.

To this error, in point of *fact*, you have in the next paragraph added a ſtriking one in point of *reaſoning*, when you affirm "that no other Religion has attempted to reconcile thoſe ſeemingly contradictory, but both true Propoſitions, the *contingency of future events* and the *fore-knowledge of God*, or the *free-will of the creature* with the *overruling grace of the Creator*." That theſe Propoſitions are *both* true, I firmly believe,

believe, as well as you; that they are *both* aſſerted in *the ſacred Writings is equally evident*; and, if this is all you mean by *their being reconciled* in theſe Writings, then we can have no controverſy upon that head. But I, in my ſimplicity, have always imagined that by *reconciling* two Doctrines, in appearance contradictory, was meant the finding out an intermediate link that connected them together, ſome point of contact that made them cohere, ſome propoſition that ſhewed, not only that they were both true ſeparately conſidered, but were alſo conſiſtent when compared together; and I muſt confeſs my ignorance, or arraign your ſagacity ſo far, as to declare that no ſuch intermediate link or propoſition have I ever found in the Holy Scriptures, nor any

any attempt made there towards its diſcovery. If ſuch an attempt had been made, it would have been ſucceſsful, and would have ſaved a world of trouble, wrangling and ſubtilty to the *Neceſſitarian* Metaphyſicians from Zeno to Leibnitz, and to the Predeſtinarian Divines from St. Auguſtin to Auguſtus Toplady. But the Sacred Writers knew too well the limits of the human underſtanding to attempt the ſolution of a queſtion which is undoubtedly reſerved for another and a more extenſive ſcene of light and knowledge. Like the Properties of Aſymptotes, the two Propoſitions in queſtion, are ſuſceptible of demonſtration, yet ſtill remain *unreconciled* and incomprehenſible —here below.

You add—" no other Religion has ſo

" fully declared the *neceſſity* of *wicked-*
" *neſs* and puniſhments, yet ſo effectu-
" ally inſtructed individuals to reſiſt the
" one, and to eſcape the other." I ſup-
poſe you meant to ſay the *neceſſity of con-*
necting puniſhment with wickedneſs, and
yet you have let the phraſe paſs other-
wiſe through four Editions. If this phraſe
be neither a ſlip of the pen, nor an error
of the preſs, I muſt be ſo free as to aſk
you, what you mean by the *neceſſity of*
wickedneſs? that by your explication of
this we may know, what idea you intend
to communicate by *effectual* reſiſtance
to what is *neceſſary*. For, if this neceſſity
be *abſolute*, then according to your Doc-
trine the Goſpel has taught us to *reſiſt*
what is *irreſiſtible*, and may equally teach
us to *do* what is *impoſſible*. And, if by
the

the ambiguous term in queſtion, you mean what the Metaphyſicians call *Hypothetical* or *Moral* Neceſſity, I muſt beg leave to tell you that this is not any neceſſity at all, unleſs you confound *neceſſity* with *contingence*, an abuſe of terms, indeed that is too common, both among Metaphyſicians and Divines *. I don't recollect that the Scripture ſpeaks any where of the *neceſſity* of Wickedneſs. It mentions often the tyrannical influence of vicious habits, and repreſents the difficulty of overcoming them in ſtrong, figurative and popular terms, which expreſs a *certitude*, that, in ſome caſes and ſome perſons they ſhall not be overcome,

* The diviſion of neceſſity into *abſolute* and *Hypothetical* reſembles that of the Iriſh Dialectician, who ſaid that all honeſt men might be divided into juſt and unjuſt.

but imply, in a ſtrict and Philoſophical ſenſe, neither the *impoſſibility* of reſiſtance, nor the *neceſſity* of ſubjection. And it is not improper to remark here, that, if the word *certitude* were ſubſtituted in the place of *neceſſity*, it would remove much ambiguity and inaccuracy in both our Philoſophical and Theological Diſquiſitions.

It is alſo going too far to ſay that "no "other Religion pretended to give *any* "account of the depravity of man, or to "point out any remedy for it *." If by an *account* here you mean a narration, the aſſertion is contrary to fact; for the Religious annals of all the Eaſtern Nations, of the Chineſe, Indians, Perſians, and Grecians, more eſpecially the ſyſtems of Pythagoras

* P. 28, 29.

Pythagoras and Plato†, mention not only the depravity, but even the *fall* of intelligent and happy Beings from order and felicity. From what tradition they derived this fact, it is not eaſy to inveſtigate at this time of day; but their knowing any thing at all of the matter is ſufficient to invalidate your aſſertion that the Goſpel alone "has pretended to give any "account of the depravity of man," unleſs by the Goſpel you mean not only the New Teſtament, but all the traditions both of the patriarchal and even of the antediluvian ages.

But perhaps, by *giving an account* of the depravity of man, you mean *accounting for it*; i. e. ſhewing *how* it happened,

† See the Phædrus of this Philoſopher, and alſo his *Polit.*

and by *what methods* it was brought about. Now, even in this ſenſe of the expreſſion, it is not exact to affirm, that the Goſpel *alone* " has ever pretended to " account for the depravity of man." You might have been ſatisfied with maintaining, that the Goſpel has accounted for it in the beſt manner, though the wiſdom of the ſacred writers has not thought proper to enter, on this head, into ſuch a circumſtantial detail as is adapted to remove all obſcurity.* But, however

* I acknowledge, without heſitation, the *obſcurity* of ſome of the narrations and doctrines of Scripture. Here below we *know but in part* the diſpenſation of grace, as well as the ways of Providence. Chriſtianity is a plan of Divine Wiſdom, that is to have its full execution in eternity ; and it is, therefore, only in a future ſcene, that we can hope to ſee *diſtinctly* its various parts, and the harmony

however that may be, it is not true, that no attempt had ever been made to give *any* account of the depravity of man; ſince it is certain, that the ſages of antiquity have pretended to account for the fall and depravity of man in their own way. Plato's account of the matter, among others, is curious. You may ſee it in ſeveral places in his writings. In his Phædrus more eſpecially he imputes the fall of men from the ethereal and primitive earth, " to their neglecting to fol-
" low the *God-guide* into the *Supra-celeſ-*
" *tial* place, where truth was to be ſeen
" in its ſource: to their taking up with

 " nectar

mony of the *whole*. The parts of this plan that are proportioned to our capacities, and conducive to our religious and moral improvement, are deſigned to occupy us *here*,—what is myſterious, at preſent, will nobly exerciſe our faculties *hereafter*.

" nectar and ambrosia (i. e. sensual and
" accidental felicity) in consequence of
" which they became heavy and sluggish,
" broke their wings, fell down upon the
" earth and entered into human bodies,
" more or less vile according as they had
" been more or less elevated—Then it
" was that good and evil were blended
" together."

Equally groundless is the assertion, that no attempt had ever been made, before the Gospel, to point out *any* remedy for the depravity of man. No remedy, indeed, so effectual as that of the Gospel, was ever exhibited to the world; but to say that no other was ever thought of, or even that the *remedy* of the Gospel was *totally dissimilar* to *every* thing that had been *thought of* previous to its publication,

tion, betrays a ſtrange unacquaintance with, or at leaſt an unaccountable inattention to the ſtate of Philoſophy and Religion, in the different periods of the world. In the fragments of the Orpheic, Pythagorean, Platonic, and Stoic Philoſophy, in the accounts that Herodotus, Iamblichus, and Euſebius give us of the religious doctrines and moral precepts of the Egyptian Sages, we find the nobleſt rules laid down for the reſtoration of the ſoul to its primitive purity; but theſe rules, indeed, were mixed with enthuſiaſm, and unſupported by any ſuccours or proſpects equal to thoſe which Chriſtianity adminiſters. They were, however, far from being in oppoſition to theſe rules: they were not even *unlike* them. *Prayer*, *faith*, the *contemplation* of the Deity, *virtue* to purify from ſenſual folly,

truth to recover the Divine Image, and *charity* and *love*, which are rays drawn from the eſſence of God, were the means preſcribed by theſe Sages, to reſtore man from his depravity and from the miſerable conſequences of his fall.

You add, in the very next paragraph, " No other (Religion) has ventured to " declare the *unpardonable* nature of ſin, " without the influence of a mediatorial " interpoſition, and a vicarious atone- " ment from the ſufferings of a Superior " Being." I own, Sir, I can form no diſtinct idea of what you call the *unpardonable nature* of ſin, without a vicarious atonement. Allowing to this latter circumſtance all the weight that is laid upon it in the expreſſions, whether literal or figurative, of the ſacred Writings, ſuch expreſſions

expreſſions do not prove that, without the expiatory ſacrifice of a Superior Being, ſin was unpardonable. The Scriptures have told us no ſuch thing;—they point out the method choſen by Divine wiſdom and mercy for the ſalvation of men, even the mediation and ſufferings of Chriſt; they declare, that, through this mediation, the pardon of ſin, the ſuccours of grace, and the bleſſings of immortality are adminiſtered to men; and it is only the preſumption and temerity of unphiloſophical Divines, that have inferred from the choice of this method, that ſin was abſolutely unpardonable without it, or by any other. Are then the *beſt* method and the *only* method ſynonimous terms? Or are you ſure, that, as in the phyſical world, we ſee *different* arrangements adapted to produce the

ſame

ſame effect, it may not be ſo in the moral world, and in the divine government? I do not believe that any rational Divine will, at this day, maintain, that God *could not* have pardoned ſin without an expiatory ſacrifice, unleſs he affirms this upon the principle, that God cannot do any thing but what is abſolutely the beſt, all things conſidered;—and, upon this principle, it may be ſaid, that God cannot do any thing but what he actually does. But that is not the queſtion: and, Sir, both you and I ought to have clear ideas and accurate expreſſions, when we treat ſuch matters as theſe, and *that* in the face of the ſophiſts of London and Paris, who look out with a ſharp eye, when they ſee ſuch a man as you take up the polemical or apologetical pen in favour of Chriſtianity.

To

To determine whether or not ſin is *unpardonable* without an expiation, we muſt conſider, before all things, what the *pardon* of *ſin* means. But, before we can form a juſt notion of the nature of *pardon*, we muſt fix with preciſion our ideas of the nature of *puniſhment*, becauſe *this* is what pardon is deſigned to remove. Puniſhment, in general, is a certain meaſure of ſuffering inflicted upon a free agent, in conſequence of the violation of a law; and the *only* end of puniſhment, conceivable, is the maintenance of the authority and influence of law, or, in other words, to *enſure obedience*. If then we conſider man in a ſtate of nature, as a tranſgreſſor of the law of Reaſon, to which he is ſubjected in that ſtate, this tranſgreſſion is puniſhed immediately by remorſe, the natural fruits of moral diſ-

order;

order; and, in many caſes, by phyſical evil, which is the effect of intemperance and vice—But this is not all,—Remorſe excites fear, or an apprehenſion, that, beſides the internal remorſe of conſcience, which is one of the immediate ſanctions of the law of nature, farther marks of diſapprobation may be expected in a future ſtate from the offended judge. This apprehenſion is juſtified by the following conſideration, that the ſanction of remorſe is leaſt felt, in this world, by the greateſt offenders, and is diminiſhed in proportion as the corruption and perverſeneſs of the ſinner increaſe, while, on the other hand, the external advantages of life, in conſequence of the eſtabliſhment of general laws, fall frequently to the lot of the vicious and the profligate. It is therefore concluded, that *external* puniſhment

ment will, in futurity, be ſuperadded to the natural effects of iniquity, as *poſitive* penalties are annexed to crimes in wiſdom (and indeed in goodneſs to the community) here below, to ſupport the laws of order, and to terrify ſpectators from tranſgreſſion.

Now, Sir, you will pleaſe to remark that this *external* puniſhment *alone* can be the object of pardon: for this pardon cannot mean that the Lawgiver and Judge *approves* of ſin: nor can it mean, that he removes that ſelf-diſapprobation and remorſe, which are the natural ſanctions of his violated law in the heart of man; for theſe can only be removed by the reſtoration of a virtuous frame to the mind, by the diminution or ceſſation of a vicious taſte, irregular propenſities, corrupt

rupt habits, and bad actions. The *external* puniſhment that is annexed to ſin, either for the correction of the guilty, or the admonition of the ſpectators, is therefore the *only* object on which pardon can produce its effect. Now as this external puniſhment is annexed to ſin, not in the nature of things like remorſe, but by *poſitive* appointment, as a method of government, it *may* be aboliſhed for reaſons of clemency or wiſdom; and thus it appears, that ſin is *pardonable*. If, indeed, the puniſhment, here mentioned, were annexed to ſin in the nature of things, and by the eſſential conſtitution of the human mind, then ſin would be *unpardonable*, and even the intervention of a Mediator could not remove it; and thus we ſee that the intervention of Chriſt neither heals the remorſe of conſcience, until

til virtue is reſtored; nor prevents the arrival of many phyſical evils (and of death among others) that are *connected* with moral diſorder in the preſent conſtitution of human nature. But I repeat it again, this external puniſhment, as it is diſtinct from the natural effects of ſin, and is ſuperadded to *theſe*, for purpoſes of example and admonition, may be ſuſpended and remitted in certain caſes, without the intervention of a vicarious atonement: and the juſtice of the Divine Legiſlator is no more impeached by this remiſſion, than that of an earthly prince would be, who, from reaſons of clemency or prudence, and in the caſe of malefactors, who are proper objects of mercy, mitigates and ſuperſedes, without any atonement to government, the rigorous execution of penal laws. The

harſh

harſh doctrine of what ſcholaſtic Divines call *vindictive juſtice* has raiſed all this duſt and perplexity about a ſubject that is as clear as the ſun at noon-day. But it is to be feared, that this doctrine has been rather modelled on the angry and revengeful paſſions of men, than on the calm and benevolent rectitude of God; and certainly (as ſome repreſent it) it is as contrary to the genius of true Religion as it is to the principles of ſound philoſophy.—If men did but conſider, that there is no fixed and intrinſic proportion between *external puniſhment* and moral evil or demerit,—that this varies according to characters, circumſtances, times, and places,*—nay, that the external puniſhment

* If in one country a degree of external puniſhment, as two, would be ſufficient to prevent the prevalence

niſhment is often increaſed by thoſe very circumſtances that diminiſh the demerit or guilt on which it is inflicted, * they would form more accurate notions of this matter: they would ſee that all ſuch puniſhments may be varied, ſuſpended, increaſed, or aboliſhed, as the ends of government may require.

Theſe obſervations, Sir, are neither deſigned

prevalence of robbery and murder, while in another country, a degree, as five, would be requiſite to produce the ſame effect; the puniſhment of the *ſame* crime would and ſhould *vary* in different countries.

* When the number of vicious examples encreaſes in a country, external puniſhments muſt encreaſe in ſeverity: and yet the perſon, who tranſgreſſes under the influence and ſeduction of multiplied examples, is leſs guilty, and has leſs real demerit, than he who is profligate where the examples of iniquity are leſs frequent and numerous.

deſigned nor adapted to diminiſh the value and importance of that *ineſtimable ſacrifice*, which the Divine Mediator made of himſelf for the ſins of the world; they only tend to prevent our forming falſe ideas of the principles on which the doctrine of mediation reſts, and to ſhew us that the ſacrifice of the croſs was rather an expedient of *choice* and *wiſdom* to ſupport moral government, and diſplay the tremendous fruits of ſin and diſorder, than a *matter of neceſſity*, which unrelenting juſtice required as an oblation, independently on the effects which this ſacrifice was to produce on the ſpectators of this aſtoniſhing and awful ſcene. Nothing is more true than the declaration of the Apoſtle, *that it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, by bringing many ſons unto glory,*

to

to make the Captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings. Heb. ii. 10. The ſufferings of Chriſt rendered him *perfect*, both as a Mediator who was to diſplay the fatal conſequences of ſin under a righteous government, and as a model that was to hold forth to mankind the moſt ſublime example of patience and reſignation, under the tranſitory evils of a probationary ſtate.

But, ſetting aſide all this reaſoning, is it true, Sir, in fact, as you affirm, "that "no other Religion, except the Chriſti-"an, has ever ventured to declare the "unpardonable nature of ſin, without "the influence of a mediatorial interpo-"ſition, and a vicarious atonement from "the ſufferings of a Superior Being?" Though I ſhould not pretend to deny entirely

entirely this affirmation, on account of the words *Superior Being*, yet I may obſerve, that the prevalence of *ſacrifices*, and thoſe expiatory, in all ages of the world known to us, ſeems to intimate an apprehenſion in the mind of man, that ſome vicarious atonement was requiſite in order to the pardon of ſin; and this is ſufficient to invalidate your affirmation, if it be alleged as a proof of your *ſecond Propoſition*; for the prevalence of expiatory ſacrifices in the heathen world, from the earlieſt times, ſhews, at leaſt, that the doctrine, in queſtion, is not "entirely unlike every thing that before had "entered into the mind of man." But what would you ſay, if, following tenets of the ancient eaſtern nations, mentioned above, we found veſtiges of a *middle Being* of great dignity, whoſe ſufferings were

were ſuppoſed to contribute to the reſtoration of fallen intelligences?

I might indeed, Sir, have ſpared myſelf the trouble of ſhewing, that novelty is *not* the diſtinguiſhing character of the ſyſtem of doctrine, which you deduce as *new* from the writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, if your CONCLUSION, and the reigning principles of your Treatiſe, were conſiſtent with what you acknowledge, p. 30. where you tell us, "that the *credibility* of theſe wonderful "doctrines depends on the opinion which "*we* entertain of the *authority* of *thoſe* "who publiſhed them to the world." I wiped my eyes twice or thrice, to be ſure that I ſaw this paſſage well. The truth then, or internal evidence of theſe Doctrines, does not depend on their *novelty*, but

but on the *authority* of the publiſhers. I think ſo too—but on what does the *authority* of the publiſhers depend? You will not ſay, I hope at this moment, that it depends upon the truth and internal evidence, or the *novelty* of the Doctrines, becauſe we are too near the ſentence where you declare the contrary.—You really ſay it, however, in the ſame breath, but in other words; and in one ſingle ſentence you make the Doctrines *dependent* and *independent* on the *authority* of the publiſhers.—Let us quote the whole paſſage, that the candid reader may judge whether or no I have miſunderſtood you: "Whether theſe wonderful Doc-
"trines are *worthy of our belief** muſt
"*depend*

* The words *worthy* of *belief*, and *true*, are equivalent, when applied to the Doctrines of the Goſpel, to their divine *authority* and *origin*.

" *depend* on the opinion, which we enter-
" tain of the *authority* of thoſe who pub-
" liſhed them to the world ; but *certain*
" it is, that *they* are *all* ſo far removed
" from every tract of the human imagi-
" nation, that it ſeems *equally impoſſible*,
" *that they* ſhould ever have been derived
" from the knowledge or artifice of man."
This is *ſaying* and *unſaying*, in a breath.
For, if the divine origin, or (which is the
ſame thing) the credibility of theſe Doc-
trines, depends on the opinion we have
of the authority of their publiſhers, then
their *perfect novelty* is of little or no con-
ſequence to their credibility ; but, if their
perfect novelty * ſhews that theſe Doc-
trines could not be derived from the

* Which is expreſſed ſtrongly by their being removed from every tract of the human imagination.

knowledge or artifice of men, then this novelty proves their divine origin, and conſequently their credibility does not depend on the authority of their publiſhers.

Thus, Sir, I have done with your ſecond *Propoſition*. All that I have ſaid, relating to it, is rather deſigned to rectify, than to refute it. For, though I am perſuaded that the eſſential Doctrines of the Goſpel, conſidered in themſelves, are not either by their novelty or nature ſufficient to prove their Divine Origin and Inſpiration, yet, when I conſider the beautiful ſimplicity with which they are delivered, and the amazing ſucceſs with which they were propagated, and when I compare theſe two circumſtances with the character, abilities and means of the perſons

perſons that publiſhed them to the World, I ſee then, indeed, ſtrong preſumptions in favour of their truth, that is, of their Divine Origin and Authority. I go ſtill farther, and pray God to forgive the ignorance or diſingenuity of thoſe, who pretend to believe firmly, that twelve obſcure, illiterate men, twelve deſpiſed Gallileans, without rank or power, intereſt or dexterity, opulence or authority, learning or eloquence, oppoſed and vanquiſhed the prejudices of the World, triumphed over the power of cuſtom, education and intereſt, expoſed themſelves to death in the moſt dreadful forms, in the ſervice of an Impoſtor, who had deceived them, and in whoſe cauſe they had nothing to expect in this World but Martyrdom, and in the next but condemnation for maintaining a lye:

After having treated, in your manner, the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, you proceed to ſome obſervations on the perſonal Character of its Author. You allege that this Character is *new* and *extraordinary*, and ſo indeed it is. You wave, however, the proofs of this, deducible from the ſupernatural Birth, the forty days Faſt, the various Miracles, the Death and Reſurrection of the Divine Saviour, which are the chief circumſtances, that conſtitute the *New* and the *Extraordinary* in his Character. Your reaſon for not employing theſe proofs, which are *ſo much*, nay, perhaps chiefly to the purpoſe, is, "becauſe theſe cir-"cumſtances will *(ſay you)* have but "little effect upon the minds of unbe-"lievers, who, *if they believe not the Re-"ligion*, will give no credit to the rela-

"tion

"tion of theſe facts." You think, then, that, at this time of day, it is poſſible to believe this Religion (i. e. to believe its Divine Authority and Origin:) previouſly to the belief of Chriſt's Miracles and Reſurrection, though it was to theſe Miracles and this Reſurrection that Chriſt himſelf appealed for the truth of his Religion, or, (which is the ſame thing) the Divinity of his Miſſion.—This is ſingular enough:—but what is ſtill much more ſo, is, to ſee you attempting to prove to theſe people, who reject the Miracles and Reſurrection of Chriſt, that his Character was *new* and *extraordinary*. For, when you have proved this to Deiſts, what then? Will this lead them to believe the Truth and Divinity of the Religion, when, rejecting the Miracles and Reſurrection of its Author, they can

only conſider him as an Enthuſiaſt or an Impoſtor? But perhaps you imagine, that, when you have proved the Character of Chriſt to be *new* and *extraordinary*, this will engage them to believe his Miracles. This, Sir, would be really trifling with the principles of evidence, in a ſtrange manner. You cannot think that the idea of Chriſt's Character, as new and extraordinary, is more adapted to prove the truth of his Reſurrection, than the ocular teſtimony of five hundred Witneſſes tranſmitted in the Annals of Hiſtory :—you cannot think that it is a ſtronger proof of this event than the conduct, zeal, and intrepidity of the Apoſtles (who would not have ſacrificed all the bleſſings of this life and the hopes of another, in order to ſupport the cauſe of a dead Impoſtor who had cruelly deceived them) or

or than the amazing power and ſucceſs that attended the Miniſtry of theſe Apoſtles with all the oppoſition and malignity of the World ſet in array againſt them.

But after all— when you come to prove that the Character of Chriſt is *new* and *extraordinary*, you make uſe, for this purpoſe, of a moſt exceptionable argument. You prove it by affirming that he is the Founder of a Religion which is totally unconnected with all human Policy and Government, and, therefore, totally unconducive to any worldly purpoſe whatever.—If you had been able to prove this pernicious Paradox, *You would almoſt have perſuaded me to be a Deiſt.* But here, as in ſome other places, you forget what you deſigned to prove, and

entertain us with many good things, which we don't *deny*, but which have no relation to what you *affirmed* and were to *prove*. This Paradox, however, deſerves a particular conſideration, and therefore I ſhall make it the ſubject of a following Letter.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

SIR,

IT has always been to me a moſt pleaſing object of contemplation, and not only ſo, but a ſtrong confirmation of my religious faith, to obſerve the beautiful connexion and harmony that reigns in the ways of God to man, and even in the different ſtates, through which human nature paſſes to moral improvement and felicity. I have always conſidered the ſtate of nature, as improved by, and conſequently in harmony with, the ſtate of civil ſociety; and I have always been accuſtomed to conſider the *latter* as deriving its principal ſecurity, its moſt amiable embelliſhments, and its ſweeteſt comforts, from the doctrines and precepts of the chriſtian

religion. I have always thought that the good chriſtian muſt be a good citizen, and that therefore the goſpel promotes directly the original purpoſes of civil polity, and encreaſes the influence of laws and government upon even the preſent felicity of man. Nay ſtill more: as I am perſuaded, that the *eſſential* principles and felicity of human nature muſt be the ſame in all its ſtates, and only differ in the degrees of their perfection, I have always conſidered the practice of the civil and ſocial virtues, in the community of which we are members *here*, as an eſſential preparation for that more perfect community of which we hope to be members *hereafter*. For certainly, Sir, there muſt be an intimate connexion between our preſent and our future ſtate of being, unleſs you ſuppoſe ſuch chaſms

and

and abrupt tranſitions in the ſcale of exiſtence, and in the progreſſive courſe of God's moral government, as are totally unlike any thing we have yet perceived in the works of nature, providence or grace. Rational and moral intelligences, who have lived here below in ſocial connexions, cannot, in any future period, be formed into a ſociety, whoſe eſſential principles are totally new, and either contrary to, or different from the eſſential principles of human ſociety here below. In a future period, indeed, accidental circumſtances may be changed, new ſources of enjoyment may be opened, certain relations, which take place here below, and which are not eſſential to the nature, but are only appropriated to the imperfect ſtate of moral ſociety, may be aboliſhed and ſucceeded by others more noble and more perfect; but

but the eſſential principles that conſtitute *here* the happineſs of human ſociety ſhall remain for ever.—From all this I conclude, that the truths and precepts of chriſtianity, though they have their great and ultimate end in a future ſtate, are nevertheleſs adapted, and, indeed, deſigned to produce the happieſt effects upon the conduct of men in their preſent civil and ſocial relations. This truth, however, does not reſt only upon the general principles now mentioned: it is ſuſceptible of demonſtration: you ſeem to acknowledge it in ſeveral places, and yet it totally overturns your bold aſſertion, * that Jeſus Chriſt founded a Religion, "which "is *totally* unconnected with *all* human "policy and government, and there-"fore totally *unconducive* to *any* worldly "purpoſe whatever."

The

* P. 33.

The citizen of Geneva †, who, with an unaccountable ſpirit of paradox and inconſiſtency, has laviſhed on chriſtianity the moſt pompous encomiums, and attacked it in the moſt indecent terms of reproach, preceded you, Sir, in this very ſtrange repreſentation of the goſpel. How ſuch a repreſentation could come into the head of a man of your penetration and diſcernment is above my comprehenſion. There are ſome miſtakes, Sir, ſo palpable, that one is almoſt aſhamed to correct them. It is irkſome to be under the neceſſity of demanding attention to the plaineſt truths, to the moſt palpable and ſtriking connexions of things;—to beg that you would recollect the ends and purpoſes of government,

† J. J. Rouſſeau.

ment, and the happy fruits that might be expected from civil aſſociations ſeconded by the influence of religion and morals.

If you meant by the paradox I here combat, that the religion of Jeſus is not connected with any *external forms* of government,—that it does not favour the conſtitution of a monarchy more than that of a republic,—that it has no relation to many of the ſubaltern ſprings of the political machine, nobody would have conteſted your aſſertion, though ſome might aſk how it came to obtain a place in your book? Or, had you meant by the paſſage under conſideration, that the chriſtian religion makes little account of extenſive dominion, overgrown opulence, commercial ſchemes, and perpetual

tual efforts towards new acquiſitions, we ſhould have left the propoſition unnoticed, as harmleſs, becauſe it is not in theſe circumſtances, but in others, that ſhall be mentioned in their place, that we muſt ſeek for the chief *reaſons* and *purpoſes* of civil aſſociations.—The chriſtian religion has no connexion with the *abuſes* which, through the paſſions of men, have defeated the *true* purpoſes of civil government, or have ſubſtituted *falſe* ones in their place: but does this prove that it is totally *unconnected* with all human government, and unconducive to any worldly purpoſe whatſoever? I thought, indeed, that I had miſtaken your meaning for a while—and I was led to this thought, by perceiving that there was no ſort of connection between what you affirmed and the arguments uſed to

ſupport

ſupport it. I ſaid to myſelf, Mr. Jenyns, by the bold words above quoted, means only, that Jeſus did not purpoſe, like Numa, Mahomet, or Moſes *, to aſpire to the rank of a civil legiſlator or ſovereign, and alſo that the chriſtian religion contains precepts more refined and noble, both relating to religion and morality, than are to be found in any human ſyſtems of legiſlation: and this, indeed, Sir, is all that you prove, or attempt to prove, in the fifteen pages that follow the aſſertion now under conſideration. This is alſo undoubtedly true; but as there is a great difference between theſe two propoſitions, *chriſtianity is ſuperior to*

* If it is a proof of the divinity of the chriſtian religion, that it ſtands unconnected with all human and civil government, the monaſtic eſtabliſhments bid pretty fair for a celeſtial origin!

to all the ſyſtems of human legiſlation,— and *chriſtianity is unconnected with all human government, and totally unconducive to any worldly purpoſes whatever*, I was tempted, in order to give your reaſoning ſome appearance of conſiſtency, to explain the latter by the former, in order to render it admiſſible. But, when I proceeded farther, and heard you avow to an objector *, "that God built the world "upon *one plan*, and a religion for it on "*another*—that he had revealed a reli- "gion, which not only *contradicts* the "principal paſſions and inclinations that "he has implanted in our nature, but "is *incompatible with the whole œconomy* "of that world in which he has thought "proper to place us," I found that I had not

* P. 133—136. 4th Edition.

not miſtaken your meaning, and alſo, that your meaning is pernicious to the cauſe of chriſtianity in the very higheſt degree.

At firſt ſight, this repreſentation, which ſets nature and grace, providence and revelation at variance, and exhibits the plan of the divine government under the aſpect of a houſe divided againſt itſelf, has a moſt unphiloſophical and forbidding appearance; but, when we come to examine it in detail, it is glaringly falſe in all its parts.

To prove this I ſhall ſhew, *firſt*, that the true ends of civil government are beſt promoted, nay can only be accompliſhed by the ſpirit and influence of the chriſtian religion; and, *ſecondly*, that this religion neither *contradicts* the natural paſſions

ſions and inclinations that God has implanted in us, nor prohibits the purſuit and enjoyment of the comforts and advantages of human life.—When theſe two points are proved, it will, I think, be evident, that the goſpel is neither *unconducive* to every worldly purpoſe, nor incompatible with the whole œconomy of a preſent ſtate.

Here, indeed, you oblige more or leſs to *preach*; I hope, however, that you will not diſdain to *hear*.

Civil ſociety was formed as a preſervative againſt diſorder and injuſtice, and thus was deſigned to augment the comforts and happineſs of human life. As *natural ſociety* was the conſequence of a gregarious principle or inſtinct in the human mind, *civil government* was the re-

ſult

ſult of reflection on the means of rendering natural ſociety agreeable and happy. It is, however, certain, that the external laws and inſtitutions of civil ſociety were, and ſtill are, inſufficient for promoting its complete felicity, nay even ſuch a degree of felicity as actually takes place in it. On the one hand, its eſtabliſhment multiplied the duties of men, by multiplying their relations; on the other, by encreaſing the wants of mankind, in proportion as the uſeful and elegant arts ſtruck out new ſources of enjoyment, it encreaſed and inflamed thoſe very appetites and paſſions, for the correction and reſtraint of which it was formed.—In this ſtate of things, ſociety ſtands in need of the ſuccour and influence of many virtues, for which its civil laws and inſtitutions make little or no proviſion; ſuch as

as piety, fidelity, equity, candour, gratitude, temperance, and benevolence. Civil laws, I ſay, make no proviſion for thoſe virtues; nay, they extend their protection (which is their only remunerating ſanction) to the hypocrite, the ungrateful, the intemperate, the perfidious, and the avaricious, if they only guard, prudently, againſt audacious and violent attempts upon the lives and properties of their fellow-citizens. There are alſo numberleſs ways in which the paſſions of men may diſturb the order, peace, and happineſs of civil ſociety, which the precepts and ſanctions of human laws can neither prevent nor remedy. Anger and revenge, envy and hatred, avarice and intemperance, immorality and licentiouſneſs, may poiſon the fountains of public felicity, without any reſtraint from the

authority

authority of civil government. If you attend to this, and conſider the ſpirit and genius of chriſtianity, how can you ſay, that this doctrine is *unconnected* with the ends of civil government, and is unconducive to any worldly purpoſe? You ſeem to have forgot that chriſtianity confirms by poſitive precepts, encourages by ſublime promiſes, and enjoins under pain of the moſt tremendous evils, thoſe virtues of piety, candour, gratitude, temperance, and benevolence, that ſtrengthen all the bonds of civil government, are the eſſential foundations of temporal proſperity, and promote all the true and ſolid intereſts of human ſociety. The duties of ſubjection to earthly governors are expreſsly enjoined by the divine author of our religion: his precepts have a direct tendency to render magiſtrates reſpectable

reſpectable and ſubjects obedient, and to reſtrain thoſe paſſions that produce anguiſh and miſery in private life, and deſolation on the public theatre of the world. His exhortations to *humility* are not deſigned to render men *abject*, mean-ſpirited, and puſillanimous, but meek, modeſt, vigilant, pacific, and humane; —and are there not many valuable and important purpoſes anſwered by theſe virtues, even in the œconomy of a preſent world? Don't you ſee by this, that the precepts of the goſpel are not deſigned to diſengage men from the duties and occupations of civil life, or from all concern in the affairs of the world? They indeed, engage chriſtians to perform theſe duties, and to manage theſe occupations and concerns, like immortal beings, with a view to futurity and to the approbation of

of HIM, who has appointed their ſtations on this tranſitory ſcene; and this, ſurely, is the moſt effectual way to perform theſe duties in the nobleſt and moſt perfect manner.—Nay more, as I have already obſerved in the beginning of this letter, it is by fulfilling, from pious and virtuous motives, the duties of magiſtrates, ſubjects, fathers, children, huſbands, wives, maſters, ſervants, fellow-citizens, friends, and ſociable members of the great family of human life, that we are prepared for exerciſing the ſame benevolence and virtue in other forms, and in more perfect relations, in a future and more exalted ſphere. Hence the œconomy of time looks towards eternity, and the proſpect of eternity influences our conduct in the œconomy of time, while the religion of Jeſus connects theſe

œconomies,

œconomies, as correſpondent and contiguous links in the immenſe ſcale of being; ſo far is it from being true, *that God* (as you oddly expreſs it) *has conſtituted a world upon one plan, and a religion for it on another.* This view of things led one of the moſt eminent geniuſes of the preſent age to expreſs himſelf in the following terms, "How admirable is the "chriſtian religion, which, while its "great object appears to be the attain-"ment of future felicity, has neverthe-"leſs the greateſt tendency to promote "our happineſs in a preſent world! *"

I ſaid, Sir, in the *ſecond place*, that the chriſtian religion neither *contradicts* the *natural paſſions* and inclinations that God has implanted in us, *nor prohibits* the

* This eminent genius was Monteſquieu.

the purſuit and enjoyment of the comforts and advantages of human life. And it is, indeed, ſingular enough, that I ſhould be obliged to prove this to *you*, in the ſame manner as if I were writing to a Carthuſian monk or a ſolitary hermit. In treating this part of your ſubject, you go upon the principle above-mentioned, even that "God conſtituted a world up-"on *one plan*, and a religion for it on "*another*,"—a ſtrange principle, indeed! this, at firſt ſight, ſeems to be a method of proceeding that ſavours of inconſiſtency, if by the *world* you underſtand not only the material ſyſtem of nature, but the moral and rational creatures that belong to it. At leaſt, the principle requires illuſtration, and I cannot ſay, that your manner of explaining it removes its difficulties. The matter is nice and delicate, and deſerves a particular diſcuſſion.

To

To explain the principle or propoſition, you tell us, that "the religion of Jeſus "not only contradicts the principal paſ- "ſions and inclinations which God has "implanted in our natures, but is *incom-* "*patible* with the *whole æconomy* of the "world, in which he had placed us *." It is true, this phraſe, and the ſtrange principles it is deſigned to explain, are put in the mouth of an objector. But this objector is your ſecond, inſtead of being your adverſary. You adopt both his *principle* and his manner of explaining it, and declare that they expreſs the true ſpirit of chriſtianity. You even reinforce the hypotheſis of the objector by phraſes of the very harſheſt kind. Allow me to examine what he and you ſay on this head.

* Page 133.

To prove that chriſtianity contradicts our natural paſſions, and is incompatible with the whole œconomy of a preſent world, — your objector and you allege in the firſt place, "that the *love of pow-* "*er*, *riches*, *honour*, and *fame*, which "are the great incitements to generous "and magnanimous actions, are by this "(i. e. chriſtian) inſtitution all depreci- "ated and diſcouraged." Now, Sir, I really don't find the mere love or deſire of the objects above-mentioned either depreciated or recommended in ſcripture; and, indeed, theſe deſires are of ſuch a nature, that they neither deſerve eſteem nor contempt; they are, in their *proper meaſure* and *degree*, the innocent propenſities of nature towards thoſe comforts of life, which God and Chriſt, by the mouth of an apoſtle, have permitted

mankind

mankind *richly to enjoy* *.—If, indeed, by the love of power, you mean *exceſſive ambition*; and, by the love of riches, forbid *avarice*, or even an immoderate attachment to opulence; and, by the deſire of honour and fame, you underſtand *vain-glory*; then I acknowledge, that theſe deſires are depreciated and diſcouraged by the ſacred writers. But why? —Not on account of their *objects*, but on account of their *degree*; not as natural paſſions, but as *natural paſſions* become *exceſſive*, and ſwelled beyond their ſubordination to nobler principles and finer affections. And truly, Sir, I never heard any body, before yourſelf, ſtyle *generous* and *magnanimous* the actions that proceed from the exceſſive love of power,

 riches,

* 1 Tim. vi. 17.

riches, and honour alone: I have always been accuſtomed to hear theſe epithets given to deeds that carry in their motives a mixture, at leaſt, of benevolence, diſintereſtedneſs and public ſpirit. And farther, by oppoſing the *exceſs* of theſe natural and innocent deſires, chriſtianity does not act in contradiction with the *œconomy of the world*, or the preſent plan of providence; it only oppoſes the abuſes of men, which I hope you will not be ſo inconſiderate as to confound with that œconomy. If there be any paſſages of ſcripture, where the love of power, riches, or fame are diſcouraged, without an eye to the degree or exceſs of the deſire, it is only in the *particular* caſe of the firſt heralds of the goſpel, whoſe ſingular ſituation required an inattention to the external comforts and advantages of life.

life. But this inattention was never deſigned as a rule to chriſtians in ſucceeding times, who are not called to perpetual ſcenes of ſuffering and martyrdom, nor obliged to ſacrifice every worldly proſpect to the eſtabliſhment of the goſpel; for the goſpel is firmly eſtabliſhed, and neither the mockeries of indecent wit, nor the frenzy of infidelity and vice, ſhall ever prevail againſt it.—Is it poſſible, Sir, that you can really think, that the maxims and precepts of the goſpel were deſigned to prevent our enjoying the benignity of providence here below, or to reſtrain us from deſiring and reliſhing the pleaſures which the ſupreme benefactor has connected with the wiſe and moderate uſe of his gifts? Conſidering this world as a ſtate of paſſage, (and, indeed, it is an inexplicable ſcene

in any other point of view) is it not agreeable to every precept of ſcripture and every dictate of common ſenſe, that we ſhould render that paſſage as comfortable as may be, without amuſing ourſelves ſo inconſiderately on the road, as to loſe ſight of our true country, or neglecting to acquire and maintain a taſte and frame of mind ſuitable to the nobler pleaſures it exhibits to our hopes? Ought a child to renounce the innocent ſweets of infancy, or a youth to reject the harmleſs pleaſures of life's early prime, becauſe he is ſoon to paſs to more grave and ſolid occupations and enjoyments of a maturer period? This would be prepoſterous. The goſpel, therefore, in pointing out, as its principal and great object, a life to come, did not mean to annihilate (as you ſtrangely inſinuate by your unguarded

unguarded expreſſions) either the *relations* or *enjoyments* of this preſent life; but only to modify our conduct in the *one* and our attachment to the *other* in ſuch a manner as to render them compatible with, nay, preparatory to our future felicity. The views and precepts of chriſtianity were deſigned to ſet bounds to thoſe appetites, whoſe exceſſive indulgence degrades reaſon, extinguiſhes piety, troubles the order of ſociety, and ends in the ruin of human nature; they were deſigned to moderate that ambition, which, when left to itſelf, engenders perfidy, cruelty, and injuſtice, and is a ſource of innumerable evils both in private and public life. In a word, they were deſigned to make us uſe the *good things of this life*, without conſidering them as our ſupreme felicity, but to eſteem them in

ſubordination to the nobler and more ſubſtantial ſources of happineſs, which we expect in a future and more perfect ſtate. Thus the doctrines of grace, inſtead of engaging us to reject with a moroſe and cynical auſterity the gifts of providence, teach us to enjoy and to appreciate them with wiſdom, and thus, inſtead of oppoſing the œconomy and purſuits of a preſent world, have a happy and ſalutary influence on our condition in it.

You ſee, Sir, that I am not aſhamed to profeſs myſelf one of thoſe whom you call, with a ſneer *, the good managers, who chuſe to take a little of this world in their way to Heaven. This, I am, from principle; for in fact I have little of the world to take; I am neither a lord

* P. 135.

lord of the board of trade, nor a member of parliament, nor a man of fortune; and therefore, when I ſay, that it is lawful for the chriſtian to be concerned in the affairs of the world, and to enjoy its advantages, I ſpeak *diſintereſtedly*; nay, I defend *your* practice againſt your principles. And it is the eaſieſt taſk I ever undertook. The only difficulty that perplexes me here is, how to do this conſiſtently with civility. It would be harſh to ſay, that you don't underſtand the ſenſe of the ſcripture-texts you have employed to maintain your opinion, and yet it would be much more ſo to affirm that you do. Without determining, which of the two is really the caſe, permit me to tell you, what every curate tells his pariſhioners often in a year, that the term *world* is frequently uſed in

ſcripture

ſcripture for the *corrupt maxims* and the *vicious cuſtoms* of the world, and as often for the *perſons*, whoſe conduct in life is directed by theſe cuſtoms and theſe maxims; and alſo for the licentious abuſe of, or exceſſive attachment to, the good things of a preſent life. In one or other of theſe ſenſes is the word taken, in all the paſſages you have alleged, to prove that chriſtianity is in direct oppoſition to the œconomy of a preſent world. Now from theſe paſſages I conclude quite the contrary; even that chriſtianity has the moſt friendly aſpect upon the true intereſts of a preſent world, by its tendency to aboliſh thoſe corrupt maxims and vicious cuſtoms that are the moſt fatal enemies to our temporal, as well as to our eternal felicity.—And where the *love of the world and the things of the world* is prohibited

in

in the ſacred writings, (if the precept does not relate to the *peculiar* caſe of the firſt teachers of chriſtianity) the word *love* is undoubtedly uſed to denote an *undue* and *exceſſive* attachment to the riches, pleaſures, and honours of the world, I will even furniſh you with two texts much more to your purpoſe (not in reality but in appearance) than any you have quoted. The firſt is that paſſage of the goſpel, in which Jeſus Chriſt declares that, in order *to be his diſcip'e, a man muſt hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and ſiſters, yea, and his own life alſo* *. In the view of ſuch a commentator as you, Sir, here is a text that annihilates, in a moment, all the moſt intimate and tender relations of a preſent world. What do I ſay?—

* Luke xiv. 26.

I ſay?—It does more than annihilate them. Nature and reaſon point out love and benevolence as the reſult of theſe relations; but if you quoted this text as you have quoted the others, you would repreſent chriſtianity as connecting with *theſe* relations malignity and *hatred*.—When St. John ſaid, † *Love not the world, nor the things of the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*; he ſaid ſomething very emphatic. It is ſimilar to the vow you made by your godfathers at your baptiſm, *to renounce the world, the devil, and the fleſh*. You don't however, ſuppoſe, that a man is obliged, by this vow to live in the world, as if he were out of it,—to refuſe a commiſſion of the peace, a ſeat in parliament, a penſion, or a peerage,—

† 1ſt Ep. ii. 15.

age,—to throw his *guidos* into the fire, or to break his ſtatues, like an iconoclaſt; to ſhut his heart to the tender connexions of love, and to the *amiable* charities of human nature. It was not certainly this monaſtic frenzy that St. John had in view; nor did he mean that we ſhould extinguiſh every elegant taſte, and every natural paſſion, when he ſaid, *Love not the world, nor the things of the world.* He tells us himſelf, in the very next verſe, his true meaning, and leaves no doubt remaining about the ideas he deſigned to expreſs by the term *world*, when he calls it *the luſt of the fleſh*, the *luſt of the eye*, and *the pride of life*, i. e. luxury and laſciviouſneſs—the avaricious purſuit of opulence—and the indulgence of vanity and ambition. But, according to you, theſe declarations of ſcripture muſt ever forbid

forbid ANY *reconciliation between the purſuits of this world and the chriſtian inſtitution* *. I was going to tell you, Sir, that ſuch a ſpirit of criticiſm, applied to ſuch a book as the New Teſtament, would draw the moſt palpable abſurdities from the pureſt expreſſions of celeſtial wiſdom. But, when I was coming down upon you with this formidable remonſtrance, I perceived, that, in the very next page, you had changed intirely the ſtate of the queſtion by expreſſions quite different from the former. Theſe different expreſſions, I preſume are deſigned to convey different ideas. In juſtifying *there* the incompatibility of the goſpel with *the purſuits of the world*, you put, before the word *purſuits*, the epithet

* Page 141.

epithet *vain*, which, indeed, ends our diſpute; though I muſt tell you that this reconciliation is made at the expence of all your preceding reaſoning on this part of your ſubject. Who doubts, Sir, of chriſtianity's being *adverſe* to the VAIN *purſuits* of this world? Who doubts of its being conformable, in this reſpect, as well in all others, with reaſon, wiſdom, and experience, which, indeed, teach us (as you juſtly obſerve) "that theſe *vain* "*purſuits* are begun on falſe hopes, car-"ried on with diſquietude, and end in "diſappointment?" No chriſtian, ſurely will deny that the profeſſed incompatibility of Chriſt's religion with the *little wretched* and *iniquitous buſineſs* of the world is far from being a defect in this religion; though I think you rather haſty

haſty in advancing *, " that were there " *no other* proof of its *divine origin*, this " alone would be *abundantly ſufficient* †." But why, worthy Sir, did you not inform us before-hand, that by theſe expreſſions, *the plan on which God conſtituted the world*; the *whole oeconomy of a preſent world*; the *purſuits* and *advantages* of the world; you meant only the *vain* purſuits and the little, wretched, iniquitous buſineſs of the world? You may perhaps reply by aſking me, why I had not the patience to wait until you had explained yourſelf? I was not ſo impatient as you may think.

I read

* Page 142.

† It is not enough to prove the divine origin of any doctrines or precepts, that they be incompatible with the *little*, *wretched*, *iniquitous buſineſs*, or *vain purſuits* of the world;—for, at this rate, the morals of Seneca would lay an undoubted claim to divine inſpiration.

I read your book twice with the cloſeſt attention, before I ſat down to write theſe letters; and I was at much pains to combine the jarring variety of your expreſſions in ſuch a manner as to draw from them a conſiſtent ſeries of thought and reaſoning; but I cannot ſay, that I ſucceeded; and I really, to this moment, am not ſure of what you mean by the *oeconomy* and *plan* of a *preſent world*. For, if I ſhould take theſe words (in the ſenſe you ſeem to attribute to them, p. 141) to mean the *vain purſuits* and the *iniquitous buſineſs* of the world, I get into another difficulty, and don't ſee how chriſtianity, by contradicting *theſe*, contradicts the *principal paſſions* and *inclinations God has implanted in our nature* *, provided theſe paſſions and inclinations be

* Page 133.

be well regulated, and exerciſed upon their proper objects with due proportion. There is no paſſion or inclination in man which, when regulated by reaſon and chriſtianity, may not tend both to private and public good, even in the œconomy of a preſent world. I do not believe, indeed, that, in a preſent ſtate, the higheſt degrees of this private or public felicity will, or, morally ſpeaking, can take place; but I ſtill maintain that the higheſt degrees of harmony and felicity, both private and public, that *can* take place here below, are attainable only by the practical influence of the precepts and doctrines of the chriſtian religion, and that chriſtianity is therefore, ſo far from being incompatible with, that it is friendly to the *true* œconomy of a preſent world, i. e. to the moſt comfortable

comfortable ſtate of which it is ſuſceptible. For, by the *oeconomy of a preſent world*, I underſtand the aſſociation of free, rational, and ſociable beings, ſuſceptible of pleaſure and pain, in a material world, for the ends of concord and mutual good offices, and for the enjoyment of as much ſatisfaction as is attainable in a ſtate of paſſage.—Here then you ſeemed to be incloſed: but you will get out again by telling us that, by the *love of power*, *riches* and *honour*, you mean an *exceſſive love*; and that, by the œconomy of the preſent world, you mean the perverſion of the ends and purpoſes of human aſſociations;—but then your Propoſition that *chriſtianity* is unconducive to any worldly purpoſes is proved falſe, and it appears only incompatible with the

the abuſes of men, which is not a very wonderful diſcovery.

You give us, indeed *, ſeveral hints of your taking the *oeconomy of the world* in this ſenſe, and eſpecially when you tell us that government, which is eſſential to the nature of man †, *cannot be managed without certain degrees of* VIOLENCE, CORRUPTION, and IMPOSITION; *yet* (ſay you) *all theſe are ſtrictly forbidden.* If you had told us what kinds of *violence* and *impoſition* are prohibited in the goſpel, we ſhould perhaps find that they are not (any more than *corruption*) eſſentially neceſſary

* Page 134.

† I did not know before that civil government (for that is manifeſtly here meant) was eſſential to the *nature* of man, though it is avowedly adapted to promote his ſecurity and comfort.

neceſſary to the management and adminiſtration of civil government. Violence, in reſtraining injuſtice and puniſhing tranſgreſſors, is, indeed, *neceſſary*, but it is not *forbidden:* unjuſt and deſpotic violence is *forbidden*, but it is not *neceſſary*. And I am perſuaded that *corruption* (whether you underſtand by that word bribery in particular, or a want of principle in general) is ſo little neceſſary to move the ſprings of government, that religion and virtue would do the buſineſs much better, if governors and governed were actuated by its influence; and this is ſufficient to refute all you ſay upon the ſubject.

Again—when you ſay that *non-reſiſtance to evil*, *perpetual patience*, and a *neglect of all we eat*, *drink*, *and wear*, muſt

ſubject

ſubject individuals to perpetual inſults, put an end to commerce, manufactures *, and induſtry, you maintain a propoſition which I ſhall not diſpute: but when you affirm that theſe are recommended and enjoined in the goſpel, as obligatory upon *all* chriſtians in particular, and *all* nations in general, and *that*, without any modification and reſtriction ariſing from a difference in times, perſons, places, and circumſtances, you affirm what the goſpel no where enjoins, and what common ſenſe (a reſpectable critic in the claſs of interpreters) palpably diſavows. It was, indeed, one of the leading rules of conduct preſcribed to the apoſtles by their divine maſter, that, in the *propagation of the goſpel*, no kind of external force or violence

* Page 135.

violence ſhould be employed, becauſe it was beneath the dignity of a divine revelation to depend, for its *firſt* reception, on any efforts of human power. It was alſo expedient that the heralds of this religion, which was to ſow, in the œconomy of *time*, the ſeeds of that BENEVOLENCE, that ſhall ſhed its fruits through the endleſs ſcenes of *eternity*, ſhould give to the world extraordinary examples of mildneſs, patience, and benignity. The rules relative to this conduct are expreſſed in the injunctions of our bleſſed Saviour, by the phraſes *of not reſiſting evil —of turning the left cheek*, &c.—*of doing good to thoſe that hate us*, and ſeveral others of a like kind. If from theſe phraſes you conclude, that the chriſtian religion forbids the magiſtrates to puniſh the crimes that threaten the deſtruction

of ſociety, or an individual to repel, even by violence, the aſſaults of an unjuſt aggreſſor, who attempts to involve him and his family in calamity and ruin, you may make the goſpel an aſylum to the profligate, and its author an enemy to the order and happineſs of human ſociety. But you ought to know, Sir, that *puniſhment* may be executed without a *ſpirit of vengeance*; that *injuries* may be repelled without malignity, that perſonal inſults *of little conſequence* to private or public happineſs may and ought to be borne with patience, and that an enemy, even when he has forfeited our eſteem, may have a claim to acts of humanity and benevolence.

It is particularly to be obſerved, that, in the precepts which ſeem favourable to

non-

non-reſiſtance, Chriſt has particularly in view what was practiſed among the Jews under the law of *retaliation*. Under the credit of this law, many reſented the ſmalleſt injuries with a malicious and revengeful ſpirit, and claimed, with rigour and violence, an indemnification from the public tribunals for trifling violations of their pretenſions or rights: ſo that the diſciples were warned by their benevolent maſter to avoid the unrelenting and vindictive ſpirit of the Jews, and to reſtrain the inhuman and tumultuous impulſe of malignant paſſions; not to renounce a wiſe, decent, and rational ſelf-defence, on the proper occaſions.

This is certainly all that is required in theſe injunctions of *non-reſiſtance* and *patience* in their application to the generality

of chriſtians; granting that they were to be practiſed with a peculiar degree of ſelf-denial by the firſt miniſters of the goſpel. By any other rule of interpretation, we will be obliged to maintain, that the chriſtian muſt at this day HATE *his father, mother, ſiſters, and brothers**, that the bread of the laſt ſupper was Chriſt's *real body* †, that the *deſign* of Chriſt was not *to ſpread peace upon earth* ‖, but *war and deſolation.* As to the *neglect* of all that we *eat*, *drink*, and *wear*, it might, indeed, have been enjoined almoſt literally upon the *firſt* preachers of the chriſtian faith, whoſe whole attention was to be employed in diffuſing the light of the goſpel, amidſt ſuch ſcenes of peril and ſuffering

* Luke xiv. 26. † Matth. xxvi. 26.
‖ Matth. x. 34.

fering as were incompatible with any concern about the external comforts or elegancies of life.—And yet, even with reſpect to *them*, it may be alleged, that theſe paſſages are not to be urged in all the extent of the letter, and are only deſigned to prevent an undue anxiety about the external circumſtances of their ſtate and condition; but the firſt dictates of common ſenſe ſhew that this inſtance of ſelf-denial is not and cannot be required from the very beſt and moſt eminent chriſtians in our day, and many of the expreſs declarations of ſcripture, ſhew that no ſuch obligation is impoſed upon them.

I wonder, Sir, that, ſince you went ſo far out of the walk of true criticiſm as to avail yourſelf of certain forms of ex-

preſſion, that are either proverbial and figurative, and therefore not to be underſtood literally, or evidently confined to particular perſons, and therefore not univerſal in their application, you did not allege the ſolemn declaration of Chriſt before Pilate, that *his kingdom was not of this world.* This *ſounds* as well for your cauſe as any other text; and yet it makes nothing at all for your purpoſe. That you may not, however, be tempted, on any future occaſion, to make uſe of it to ſhew that chriſtianity is *unconducive to any worldly purpoſe*, I ſhall point out here its true ſignification in order to ſecure it on the ſide of thoſe who defend chriſtianity on more rational principles, than thoſe which your book *ſeems* to contain.

When Chriſt made that ſublime declaration,

ration, my *kingdom is not of this world*, it is palpably evident, that he underſtood by this the following things—that *it* did not derive its *origin* from efforts of human policy, but from the miraculous interpoſition of God alone—that *its* great *end* and *deſign* went far beyond the ends and purpoſes of civil aſſociations, and aimed at nothing leſs than to deliver mortals from the puniſhment of ſin, the tyranny of vice, the power of death, and the fear of judgment, and to prepare them, by holineſs and virtue, for happineſs and immortality—that *its laws* inſtead of being confined to the outward actions of men (like thoſe of civil legiſlators) were addreſſed to the inward principles and affections of the heart—that *its power* different, both in its means and effects, from the power of the world, was

rational, gentle, perſuaſive, and inviſible, forming its conqueſts by that *word* of truth that enlightens the underſtanding, and that ſpirit of grace that improves the heart,—and that its *rewards* are ſpiritual and rational, and its *duration eternal.* Such, Sir, are the eſſential ideas contained in the ſublime declaration of the Son of God before the Roman governor. But, becauſe the kingdom of Chriſt is infinitely ſuperior to the kingdoms of this world in its origin, end, laws, power, rewards, and duration, does it follow from thence, that it has no connexion with the felicity of earthly empires, and with the true intereſts of civil ſociety here below?—Or that even the true ſubjects of this kingdom ought to be alienated from all concern in the intereſts and affairs of a preſent world? No, Sir; this concluſion, as

I have

I have already ſhewn, is unreaſonable; it ſavours more of myſtical enthuſiaſm or monaſtic auſterity, than of the benevolent, humane, and liberal ſpirit of the chriſtian religion.

LETTER V.

SIR,

IN my former letter, I conſidered largely your ſecond propoſition, and ſhewed the inſufficiency of the arguments by which you ſupport it, as well as the indefenſible nature of the propoſition itſelf. In effecting this, I was obliged to follow you into your CONCLUSION, where you had ſcattered a part of theſe arguments. I now return to wait upon you with ſome remarks, not upon your *third propoſition* itſelf, which I think true and unexceptionable in all its parts; but on the examples and arguments you employ to illuſtrate and defend it. Theſe I think partly illuſory, and partly prepoſterous;

terous; and you appear to me, in this part of your work, to beſtow upon chriſtianity encomiums which it muſt diſavow.

You very juſtly obſerve in your third propoſition, "that a ſyſtem of ethics may "be collected from the New Teſtament, "in which every moral precept, founded "on reaſon, is carried to a higher degree "of purity and perfection, than in any "other of the ancient philoſophers of pre-"ceding ages." You alſo explain perfectly well what you mean by moral precepts founded on reaſon, when you tell us they are ſuch as "enforce the prac-"tice of thoſe duties that reaſon informs "us muſt improve our natures, and con-"duce to the happineſs of mankind, ſuch "as piety to God, *benevolence* to man, "juſtice, charity, temperance, and ſo-"briety,

" briety, and ſo on."—The latter part of your third propoſition is expreſſed in theſe terms: " every moral precept " *founded on falſe principles*, is entirely " omitted." Now by precepts, founded on falſe principles, you profeſs to mean " thoſe which recommend fictitious vir- " tues, productive of none of theſe ſa- " lutary effects" (above-mentioned).— And theſe fictitious virtues, which, according to you, are no virtues at all, are *valour*, *patriotiſm*, and *friendſhip*;—you even go ſo far (which, indeed, is ſurpriſing) as to affirm that theſe *fictitious virtues* are incompatible with the *genius of the chriſtian religion*, and, if this be true, you do them too much honour to call them even *fictitious virtues*; you ought to have ſpoken out boldly, and called them *vices*, or at beſt *defects*:

This,

This, however, is carrying matters too far. The three moral objects in queſtion are certainly very ambiguouſly underſtood, and their ſplendid names are beſtowed, in the common converſation of the world, upon efforts, paſſions, and connexions, that have not a ſpark of virtue in them: for the fearleſs and brutal temerity of the duelliſt is called *valour*; the popular noiſe of the corrupt and ambitious is eſteemed *patriotiſm*, and connexions, cemented by intereſt, licentiouſneſs, or caprice, are unworthily honoured with the name of *friendſhip*. The abuſes of men be to themſelves; let them not, however, betray us into falſe judgments; let them not lead us to confound the nature of things with the errors of human fancy, nor to imagine that there

is

is no genuine coin, becauſe we meet with a multitude of counterfeits.

It is ſingular enough, that the omiſſion of *patriotiſm* and *friendſhip*, among the duties enjoined in the goſpel, was ſneered at by Lord Shaftſbury as a defect in that inſtitution, and is admired by you as a proof of its perfect purity and divine origin. The truth of the matter is, that you are both miſtaken. This omiſſion was the dictate of common ſenſe, which ſhews that *his* ſneer was as ill-founded as it was inſolent; but it does not ſuppoſe, that the qualities in queſtion are all of them *fictitious virtues*. *Your* reflection is certainly not juſt: at beſt it favours of exaggeration.

With reſpect to *valour*, I hope to convince you that all you ſay on that head is ambiguous

ambiguous and inconcluſive;—and then I ſhall ſhew its true nature, and its perfect conformity with the genius and ſpirit of the chriſtian religion. Firſt, You ſay, "that valour or active courage is *for* "*the moſt part* a conſtitutional virtue, and "therefore can have no more claim to "*moral* merit than wit, beauty, health, "or ſtrength, or any other endowment "of the mind or body." If you had ſaid, that it was *entirely* a conſtitutional virtue, your concluſion would have had a greater appearance of accuracy; for, granting it to be a conſtitutional virtue only *for the moſt part*, this ſuppoſes that there is a part of it which is not conſtitutional, and this, of conſequence, may have a degree of merit proportioned to the motives and principles that excite it. After all, ſir, the ſubject of conſtitutional

onal qualities or virtues is one of the niceſt and moſt difficult topics in the ſphere of moral enquiry. Are not all qualities and all virtues *more* or *leſs* conſtitutional *, i. e. muſt there not be in our mental conſtitution, or in its union with our material frame, or in both, ſome previous diſpoſition to all the virtues we poſſeſs, which reflection improves, and culture brings to maturity?—Whether this previous diſpoſition comes from nature or grace is a point whoſe diſcuſſion is of no moment

* The term *conſtitutional* is applicable to thoſe propenſities, diſpoſitions, capacities, and qualities, (or to that meaſure of each of them) which a moral being has acquired without any effort of its own activity, without previous reflection and culture,—from whatever ſource theſe propenſities and acquiſitions may have immediately proceeded, whether from the original frame of the mind, the organiſation of the body, or from *both* in union.

moment in the preſent queſtion; in either caſe it is the work of God, and not of man; but this does not hinder the *quality* or the virtue from being *amiable*, *praiſe-worthy*, and *excellent* *; (for I don't underſtand the word *meritorious* out of its *law-ſenſe* in any other ſignification). When the previous or (if you pleaſe) the *conſtitutional* diſpoſition, is approved by a *reflex act* of the mind, and cultivated and improved in conſequence of this reflection, this renders the virtue *voluntary*, and thus *imputable*, and thus *meritorious*, if you will oblige me to uſe that

* Suppoſe a being, (an angel, for example) originally created, if that be poſſible, in a high degree of perfection, with a *confirmed* taſte for ſanctity and order, and a predominant ſpirit of benevolence and wiſdom,—would not all theſe qualities be, in a certain ſenſe, *conſtitutional?* But would they be leſs amiable on that account?

that word.—Now valour, active valour, in this point of view, is not more neceſſarily conſtitutional than any other virtue, than patience, reſignation, or benevolence. You cannot ſhew me, that it ariſes from any particular arrangement or modification of matter and motion; you cannot point out any ſuch mould in which *moral qualities* are caſt, and therefore your word *conſtitutional* denotes at beſt an *occult cauſe*, and conveys no diſtinct notion that can be an object of examination. Hence your firſt obſervation is erroneous, and, if the author of chriſtianity had omitted the recommendation of valour, on account of its being conſtitutional, he muſt have omitted, for the ſame reaſon, patience, contentment, reſignation, and almoſt all the virtues.

But

But you go ſtill farther and tell us not only that *valour* is conſtitutional, "but "that it is the uſual perpetrator of all "violences which diſtract the world with "bloodſhed and devaſtation, the engine "by which the ſtrong plunder the weak, "the proud trample upon the humble, "the guilty oppreſs the innocent, the in-"ſtrument of ambition, and ſo on." As you have not thought proper to define, preciſely, what you mean by the term *valour*, nor pointed out where it coincides with, or differs from *fortitude*, *courage*, and *bravery*, you leave us to take it in the vulgar ſenſe, and here it is obvious, that effects, quite contrary to thoſe you have mentioned, belong equally to valour. For, ſurely, *valour* has often been employed in defending the innocent, in humbling the proud, in puniſhing the guilty,

guilty, and in maintaining the liberties and felicity of a people. So that, in this general view, valour is as ſuſceptible of good effects as of evil ones, and is either uſeful or prejudicial to ſociety, according as it is employed by benevolence and juſtice, or by lawleſs ambition, envy, or revenge. You make a very thin-ſpun and unſatisfactory diſtinction between *active* and *paſſive* courage; and I am ſorry to be obliged to tell you, that all your illuſtrations of this diſtinction are full of ſophiſtry and contradictions. You ſay, that *active* (by which I gueſs you mean military) courage, is what a chriſtian can have nothing "to do with *; "that it ariſes from the meaneſt diſpoſi-"tions of the human mind, *paſſion*, *va-"nity*, and *ſelf-dependence* †; that it is "the

* Page 56. † Page 57.

" the *offspring* of pride and revenge and " the ferocity of a ſavage;" and yet you tell us that you do not " object to the " PRAISE and honours beſtowed on the " valiant,"—nay you think theſe " a " tribute due by thoſe, whoſe *ſafety* and " affluence they have promoted by their " dangers and ſufferings *.—Indeed?— By your account of them, however, they ought to be driven out of human ſociety to howl in deſerts with wolves, or, at beſt, with lions. I ſhewed you ſufficiently in my former letter, how unaccountably you interpreted thoſe paſſages of the goſpel, that forbid the revenging injuries, into an *univerſal* non-reſiſtance. The Jews had abuſed their law of retaliation in ſuch a notorious manner, and had taken ſuch occaſion from it to gratify

* Page 56.

tify a malicious and vindictive ſpirit, that the benevolent Saviour thought proper to uſe the ſtrongeſt terms to diſcourage a practice ſo contrary to the genius of his divine religion. But that theſe prohibitions ſhould hinder the virtuous and chriſtian prince from oppoſing the aſſaults and devaſtations of a licentious uſurper,—that this ſhould prevent the citizens of a free country from drawing the ſword in defence of their ſovereign, their freedom, their national happineſs, againſt a lawleſs invader,—that ſuch active oppoſition ſhould be called the offspring of *pride*, *revenge*, and ſavage *ferocity*,—and that the impoſſibility of its ariſing from *any other* principles ſhould be ſo boldly aſſerted: all this I could never have expected to ſee coming from any other quarter than fanatical quietiſm. I could never

never have imagined that it would ſlip from the pen of Mr. Jenyns, and paſs uncorrected through four editions of his work.

You may think perhaps, that you have annihilated all the eſteem that is due to *valour*, when you obſerve in the following harmonious gingle of words, "that "if chriſtian nations were nations of "chriſtians, all war would be impoſſible, "and *valour* could neither be of uſe or "eſtimation, and therefore could never "have a place in the catalogue of chriſ-"tian virtues, being irreconcileable with "all its precepts." You might as well prove that *induſtry* is not an uſeful and laudable habit, becauſe, if all men were rich, there would be no occaſion for it. Beſides, if the chriſtian nations were nations

tions of chriſtians, there would be as lit-occaſion for *mercy*, *forbearance*, *forgive-neſs of injuries*, as there would be for *valour*; but does this prove that, in the preſent ſtate of things, theſe virtues are of no value?

The truth of the matter is, that *valour* or the *exertion of vigour in a given cauſe, without being daunted by the proſpect of danger, ſuffering, or death*, is neither a vice nor a virtue, though it has an aſpect full of elevation of mind.——Valour is good or bad, laudable or condemnable, according to the cauſe in which it is employed, and the principles and motives by which it is excited and nouriſhed. When it is employed in the cauſe of oppreſſed innocence, of oppreſſed nations, and that, not from the mere impulſe of intereſt

intereſt or thirſt of fame, but from a generous regard to public good, it then aſſumes the colour of virtue: becauſe it denotes a mind that riſes with dignity, above the narrow ſphere of ſelf-love. Valour here, is blended with benevolence, and diſcovers the ſtrength of that divine principle. If the natural fear of ſuffering or death be ſtrong in the mind, and valour is excited merely by principle; in ſuch a caſe, it is the moſt beautiful exertion of benignity that can be imagined; and is perhaps, of all other *energies*, that which gives human nature the higheſt aſpect of dignity. But, if you will confound with *valour* the fearleſs *temerity* of an impetuous ſoldiery, it is no great merit in chriſtianity to have omitted recommending it;—and, if you take it in its true and moral ſenſe, you will not find

that chriſtianity has, any where, diſcouraged it. The founder, indeed, of that divine religion, who, during his whole miniſtry, was apprehenſive, leſt the *falſe* notions of his kingly character ſhould excite the Jews to rebellion, and animate them to the erection of a temporal monarchy, could not, with prudence recommend (what you call active or fighting) *valour*, among the virtues he was perpetually inculcating. He, however, recommended thoſe qualities, that are *eſſential* to the *morality* and excellence of valour, by exhorting his diſciples *not to fear thoſe* that can only *kill the body*; by forming their minds to the purſuit of happineſs in objects independent on the world and its advantages,—by animating them to relinquiſh every external pleaſure, and ſubmit to the greateſt extremities

mities of pain and ſuffering, rather than deviate from the paths of virtue, or deſert the cauſe in which they were engaged, which was the cauſe of divine benevolence and mercy. The honour and ſpirit of chriſtianity is, in this point of view, the ſame with reſpect to its profeſſors in all ages.—In ſhort, magnanimity, firmneſs of mind, humanity, patience and benevolence, enter, either as *principles*, *conſtituents*, or *concomitants*, into the idea of *true valour*, and therefore the divine author of our religion could not look upon it as *falſe* or *fictitious* virtue.

It would be ſtill more ſurpriſing, (if *wit* did not often make *judgment* waver) to ſee you placing *patriotiſm* and *friendſhip* in this claſs of *falſe* and *fictitious* virtues.

If there can be a frown in heaven, there certainly was one formed on the immortal brows of virtuous legiſlators and love-breathing ſeraphims, when they perceived a good man, like you, harbouring ſuch a thought in his mind, or letting it drop from his pen. It is not, however, a flight of imagination that can correct an error in morals, and therefore I propoſe to enter into a particular diſcuſſion of this nice point.

If you had defined the terms *patriotiſm* and *friendſhip* this might perhaps have prevented your attempts to eclipſe the luſtre of theſe manly and amiable qualities: at leaſt, we would then have ſeen, whether or not you conſidered them, as the *effuſions* of univerſal *benevolence*, directing its exertions and energy to particular

ticular objects, in certain determinate circles, the one more and the other leſs extenſive. If you had conſidered them in this point of view, it is impoſſible, that, in your ſober ſenſes, you could have repreſented them as *falſe* and *fictitious* virtues;—and if you regard *patriotiſm* as inconſiſtent with the love of mankind, and *friendſhip* as a connexion founded on intereſt, corruption, or caprice, then we can have no diſpute. I can only charge you with an abuſe of words, and put you in the hands of the grammarians.

Indeed, as to *patriotiſm*, you draw it in ſuch colours as ought rather to have rendered it an object of prohibition, than a quality to be either recommended or encouraged: for you allege, "that it

" *commands us to* OPPRESS *all countries*
" *to advance the* IMAGINARY *proſperity*
" *of our own*,—to copy the mean partia-
" lity of an Engliſh pariſh officer, who
" thinks injuſtice and cruelty meritori-
" ous whenever they promote the inter-
" eſts of his village." Now, Sir, this is patriotiſm, juſt as *fortitude* is cruelty, *humility* meanneſs, *œconomy* avarice, or *generoſity* prodigality, *liberty* licentiouſneſs, or the *ſpirit of faction* a zeal for the public good.

Patriotiſm is a *zeal for the happineſs of the country to which we belong, and where the moſt numerous, intimate, and affecting of our ſocial connexions, are formed and cultivated.* By this definition, patriotiſm is a branch of univerſal benevolence, and, inſtead of oppoſing, is adapted

ed to promote, at leaſt in part, its great object. For what is the *object* of univerſal benevolence, but the *general good* or the *good of the whole?* Now this general good is too extenſive an end, to be directly accompliſhed by the efforts of any man; and it can only be promoted by every perſon's having a hearty affection for the ſociety to which he belongs, and a warm zeal for its welfare. Univerſal benevolence is a generous ſentiment, a noble affection; but its real exertion is beyond the ſphere of humanity, and it can only become active and uſeful by its application to *particular* objects. A man would certainly make a ridiculous figure, who, under the pretext of being obliged by chriſtianity to exerciſe only univerſal benevolence, ſhould neglect his *country* and thoſe *ſmaller ſocieties*,

eties, to which alone the *uſeful* effects of his zeal can extend, and amuſe himſelf with forming idle and romantic ſchemes for the benefit of *foreign* nations, or the *whole race* of mankind. In ſuch ſchemes the individual or the ſmaller ſocieties would be neglected, and the puny effort would be loſt upon the whole. What would you think of a generous alms-giver, who ſhould ſet apart a thouſand pounds to be *equally* diſtributed between all the poor of all nations, tongues, and languages? All that is required to make *patriotiſm* a real and ſubſtantial virtue, is, its exerting its chief zeal, where it can be really effectual, even for the intereſts of the community to which we belong, in a manner conſiſtent with and ſubſervient to the great law of univerſal benevolence. Such patriotiſm *may* exiſt,

exiſt, and it is evidently implied in the precepts of the goſpel. It was not, indeed, neceſſary to make it the object of a poſitive precept. Why?—not as you ſtrangely aſſert, becauſe it is a *falſe* and *fictitious* virtue, but becauſe it is included in the love of mankind,—is what all are powerfully inclined to from education, cuſtom, and many other reaſons, and particularly becauſe, at the time of our Saviour's appearance, the true ſpirit of patriotiſm was groſsly perverted by the Romans, who were the plagues and ſcourges of mankind, and had transformed their country into a wicked faction againſt the tranquillity and happineſs of the reſt of the world; while the Jews were ſo partially fond of their own nation, that they looked upon themſelves as the only favourites of Heaven, and were diſpoſed

in erecting a temporal kingdom, to bind *the other nations in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron.* At ſuch a period, it was not expedient to recommend narrow views. It was, on the contrary, neceſſary to inculcate that univerſal benevolence that could only purify the principles of *patriotiſm* by oppoſing the progreſs of ambition, avarice, and luxury, which had ſpread ſuch dreadful deſolation and ſubverted liberty, juſtice, and all the ſocial virtues. And, nevertheleſs, the divine founder of chriſtianity, though he did not expreſsly enjoin patriotiſm by a peculiar and poſitive precept, gave encouragement to it by his example. He wept over Jeruſalem under the view of the dreadful calamities that were hanging, like an awful cloud, over it, in the counſels of a righteous providence. He

felt

felt the tendereſt emotions of humanity for that devoted nation, directed his zealous labours to reform the manners of its inhabitants, and to make them happy, offered them his ſuccours and protection, with that natural affection, that he ſo beautifully deſcribed by the pathetic image of a hen, *that taketh her chickens, and-covereth them with her wings.*

You treat, Sir, the article of *friendſhip*, (even though you call it a *fictitious* virtue) with more tenderneſs, than that of *patriotiſm*; and here I ſuppoſe the generous feelings of your heart have modified the harſhneſs of your ſyſtem. You are, ſurely, too well acquainted with the amiable ſympathies of human nature to eſteem lightly a connexion, of which it

it may be as truly ſaid, (as it has been of an attachment ſtill more tender) that it is the *cordial drop*, which Heaven has thrown into the *cup of life* to render it palatable. And yet your notions of the merit of friendſhip are inaccurate in the higheſt degree—That I may avoid both confuſed ideas and vague expreſſions on this delicate and intereſting ſubject, it will be proper to determine preciſely the *nature* and *properties* of friendſhip; and then we will ſee whether you have not been ſomewhat raſh in aſſerting, that, *in its utmoſt purity*, it deſerves no recommendation from chriſtianity.

You might have ſaved yourſelf the trouble of telling us, that, "if friendſhips "are formed from alliances in parties, "factions, and intereſts, or from a par-"ticipation

" ticipation of vices, they are then both " miſchievous and criminal;" for true friendſhip, and not its counterfeit, is the object under conſideration. What then is true friendſhip, in its nature, foundations, in the circumſtances that cement it, and the qualities that attend it?—— My anſwer is,

Friendſhip is a *ſincere*, *fervent*, and *permanent* union of minds, *formed by mutual* affection and eſteem,—*founded* on real *worth*, and *cemented* by intimate *acquaintance*, frequent intercourſe, exchange of good offices, and ſimilitude of taſte, temper, and manners: it is inſeparably *attended* with perfect *candour* and unreſerved openneſs of heart,—intereſts itſelf with quick feeling and ſtrong ſenſibility in the pleaſures and pains of its object,—

is

is raiſed above all ſuſpicion and jealouſy, above every mean and ſelfiſh view,—ſheds indulgence upon infirmities and imperfections,—and, with the greateſt tenderneſs and delicacy of affection, unites the intereſts of thoſe whom it connects, and makes their joys and ſorrows common.

Such, Sir, are the principal and eſſential lines of *true* friendſhip. The chriſtian, indeed, muſt ſacrifice the intereſt of his friend to that of his country, and muſt keep the effuſions of friendſhip in ſubordination to the ſupreme law of univerſal benevolence. This ſhews, that there are more ſublime virtues than *friendſhip*; but it does not prove the latter to be a fictitious virtue. There is a variety of virtues conſtantly operating in the culture of

of friendſhip, ſuch as candour, indulgence, beneficence, and all the characters of charity, ſo beautifully delineated by an inſpired apoſtle.

I readily acknowledge, that *friendſhip* is leſs an object of precept than *patriotiſm*; becauſe this latter, *in its very eſſence*, is a poſitive branch of univerſal benevolence; whereas neither benevolence, nor even benevolence joined with eſteem, conſtitute *wholly* the *peculiar* nature of *friendſhip*. This latter connexion, as it requires a conſent and harmony of minds, and other circumſtances already mentioned which are not always in our power *, cannot

* There are innumerable inſtances (as an excellent moraliſt obſerves) in which perſons may find *ſeveral* among their acquaintance, and in the ſame ſphere of life, whom they *highly eſteem*, but not

cannot be inculcated as a matter of obligation or as an eſſential duty. But, though this be a reaſon for not making friendſhip the object of a poſitive and indiſpenſable precept, yet it is no reaſon for calling it a *fictitious virtue*; nor is its appropriating benevolence to one ſingle object, or, at beſt, to a ſmall number of objects, a reaſon for its not having been admitted among the precepts of chriſtianity;

not *one* proper to be choſen for a *cloſe* and *intimate* friend; ſo that the recommending *private friendſhip*, in the general, muſt have been abſurd, ſince it is only a rare and accidental obligation, and never falls in the way of a great part of mankind. And, beſides, ſuch a precept might have been attended with miſchievous effects; for then the bulk of the world, thinking friendſhip a duty of religion, and a neceſſary branch of ſublime and heroic virtue, would enter into raſh, unconcerted, and diſagreeable alliances, which would produce much diſorder, &c.

nity; for, where the circumſtances, that give riſe to friendſhip, take place, all the energies and effuſions of the heart in that amiable union are *moral* and *benevolent*.

I wiſh, Sir, you had reflected a little, before you quoted *, as authority on this point, the paſſage of St. Luke, where Chriſt ſays, *If you love them which love you, what thanks have you? for ſinners alſo love thoſe that love them.* Does this text prove that connexions of friendſhip have little pretenſions to merit? No, Sir, this paſſage has no relation to *friendſhip*: it regards beneficence and liberality, as every commentator will tell you, and as the ſpirit and connexion of the words evidently ſhew. Sinners (by which term Chriſt

* Page 61.

Chriſt here manifeſtly means, not imperfect creatures, but profligates) are not ſuſceptible of friendſhip, whoſe baſis muſt be virtue, of whatever materials the ſuperſtructure is compoſed:—VERA *amicitia non niſi inter* BONOS.

You have miſunderſtood here the words of Chriſt; but it is ſcarcely poſſible, that you can miſunderſtand his conduct with reſpect to (what you call) the *falſe* and *fictitious virtue* now under conſideration. Can you give *friendſhip* theſe epithets, when you ſee the DIVINE MAN approaching to the grave of Lazarus,—when you behold the tears he ſhed over it,—and when you attend to the various affecting circumſtances of this tender ſcene? There is *ſomething more* here, than mere benevolence; and that *ſomething* is intrinſically

cally beautiful and engaging. He, whoſe benevolence, was not, like ours, limited and confined;—He, who could make the effects of that benevolence extend to all nations, and perhaps to all worlds;—He, nevertheleſs, took a tender part in the more limited *charities* of human life, and he conſecrated *friendſhip* by his perſuaſive example. It was *thus* he loved Lazarus. Moreover,—when he choſe twelve perſons for his immediate followers, he made one of them his friend: and that friend leaned upon his breaſt at the laſt ſupper, adhered to him at the tribunal, where Peter denied him; and was charged by him, in his dying moments, with the tender care of his domeſtic relations.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

SIR,

IT is with a ſingular pleaſure, that I find myſelf relieved from the irkſome taſk of an opponent; though I ſhall be obliged to reſume it, or ſomething like it, before I come to the end of your book. Your excellent account of the *precepts* of the goſpel gives me this relief. Your definitions, or rather deſcriptions, of the virtues that correſpond with the great object and end of the chriſtian religion are judicious and ſentimental; they will force the aſſent of a good underſtanding, but their truth and excellence will be beſt comprehended by the feelings of a good heart. You have breathed in-

to

to theſe deſcriptions the true and genuine ſpirit of chriſtianity, and ſhewn in them, to man, the true lines of that immortal character, to which alone felicity and perfection are or can be annexed, in the moral government of God.

But, worthy Sir, when oppoſite to this lovely tablature of chriſtian virtue you place, in contraſt, the imperfect ſyſtem of pagan morality, have you been enough upon your guard againſt exaggerated and deluſive colouring? Do you not go too far when you ſay *, "that the moſt "celebrated virtues of the ancients were "*high ſpirit*, intrepid *courage*, and im-"placable *reſentment?*" Methinks a ſlight reading, even of Cicero's Offices, and the explication that you will there find of

* Page 88.

of the *four* cardinal virtues, would have been ſufficient to prevent this ſingular aſſertion. Not that I have ſuch high ideas of the pagan virtues, as ſome entertain; —not that I mean to compare them with the virtues of the goſpel, which are much purer in their principle, and much more noble and extenſive in their object; but that I think it hard to take from thoſe, who were leſs favoured than we are, the little they had.—But you aſtoniſh me, indeed, when you add *, "that the "moſt celebrated virtues of the pagans "are more oppoſite to the ſpirit, and "more inconſiſtent with the end of chriſ-"tian morality, than even their moſt in-"famous vices; and that a *Brutus* and "a *Cato* leave the world more unquali-"fied

* Page 91, 92.

" fied for, and more inadmiſſible into " the kingdom of heaven, than a *Meſſa-* " *lina* or an *Heliogabalus*, with all their " profligacy about them." This is ſuch a paradox as I don't remember to have met with elſewhere.—Brutus (ſay you) murdered the oppreſſor of his country : you ought to have ſaid killed, until the *murder* had been proved : I don't deny that it was *a ſort* of murder. However, if murder (in the uſual acceptation of that word) is then only committed, when a man takes away the life of his fellow-creature, from the impulſe of cruelty, perſonal intereſt, or lawleſs reſentment, the action of Brutus, which was, or is ſuppoſed to have been of a *public nature*, in its motive and object, ſeems rather to deſerve the name of homicide, committed through political fanaticiſm,—a pernicious

nicious paſſion, indeed, which is always ſubverſive of civil order, though it does not always denote bad intention. Political fanaticiſm is the ſource of anarchy, as political ſuperſtition is the ſupport of tyranny. If, however, in the action of BRUTUS, *a zeal for the* REPUBLIC was the predominant motive, whatever chaſtiſement his homicide might have deſerved from the civil magiſtrate, it could not paſs for murder in the eye of the all-ſeeing Judge; much leſs ought you to have founded upon it a compariſon between his moral character and thoſe of a Heliogabalus and a Meſſalina to his diſadvantage. It is well known, that the private character of Brutus was mild and amiable; and it is pretended, that, by the particular conſtitution of the Roman government, his killing Cæſar was a ſtep

ſuſceptible

ſuſceptible of defence. This, indeed, I don't affirm; it is, however, certain, that the point has been diſputed; but no diſpute can ariſe about the incapacity of a Meſſalina, or of an Heliogabalus, to approach an abode where purity of heart and ſanctity reign, eſpecially if they pretended to enter there *with all their profligacy about them.*

For vice, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Would ſate itſelf on a celeſtial bed
And prey on garbage.

Shakeſpeare's Hamlet.

You ſeem, Sir, to have a great averſion to war, and ſo has every man that has not blunted the precious feelings of benevolence and humanity: but this averſion has made you warm, and your

warmth has introduced no ſmall confuſion into your ideas and reaſonings: how otherwiſe could you throw out ſuch propoſitions as the following: "*thoſe who* "*are actuated* by *valour*, *patriotiſm*, or "*honour*, *may be* VIRTUOUS, HONEST, "*and even* RELIGIOUS; but they can- "not be CHRISTIANS." You, indeed, ſoon forget this propoſition, and tell us, that *without chriſtianity* we can have *no religion at all*—*Pergis pugnantia ſecum frontibus adverſis componere:* but you will be little alarmed at this contradiction, ſince you have (as we ſhall ſee preſently) made a diſcovery in dialectics, even this, that *contradictory propoſitions may be true:* this diſcovery annihilates the ſcience, and, with it, all the foundations of truth and certainty; but it ſeems there is no help for that: and we have

nothing

nothing left but to call out with the poet, *quantum eſt in rebus* INANE.

To return to the poor pagans, you are ſtill more hard upon them, than the ardent and orthodox biſhop of *Hippo*. He called their virtues *ſplendid ſins*; you place them on a level with the moſt *infamous vices*; but then you make ſome amends for this haſty deciſion, and tell us *, that men, *actuated* by them, may be virtuous, honeſt, and even *religious*: you, however, affirm, that they cannot be chriſtians, though you charitably grant, that this title may belong to the *vicious* and *profligate*. You acknowledge, indeed, that the profligate man is a bad chriſtian, and why not allow the patriot

* Page 94, 95.

and the man of honour, at leaſt, the ſame privilege? "Becauſe," *ſay you*, "a man †, whoſe *ruling* principle is "honour, erects a ſtandard of duty, "diametrically oppoſite to the whole te- "nor of the chriſtian religion." If honour is ſought by virtuous and pious deeds, this aſſertion is not true, at leaſt, it is not accurate; if it is ſought by rapine, faction, or bloodſhed, it is *falſe honour*, and your propoſition beats the wind. Beſides —no man ever erected honour as a *ſtandard* (by which I ſuppoſe you mean a criterion

† Mr. Jenyns ought to have ſaid, "a man who "is *actuated* by honour."—This was the expreſſion uſed in the beginning of the argument, and it conveys an idea different from that which we attach to the terms *ruling principle*; the former is particular, the latter is univerſal.—A man may be *actuated* by a ſenſe of honour, without its being his *ruling principle* in the conduct of life.

terion or a principle) of duty. *Honour* is the conſequence and not the principle of duty:—it is the tribute of approbation or applauſe that is beſtowed by ſpectators upon generous, virtuous, and, with your leave, upon chriſtian deeds. In this point of view, it is one of the *good things* of a preſent life, and, if St. Paul is not miſtaken, it will take place, in the pureſt and nobleſt ſcenes of future exiſtence, when eternal life ſhall be adminiſtered to thoſe, who, *by a patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory,* HONOUR, *and immortality* *. But if you will perſiſt to combat, under the name of *honour*, that vain-glory and thoſe ſplendid titles, that are acquired by rapine and lawleſs bloodſhed, your abuſe of language, which naturally introduces

* Rom. ii. 7.

troduces confuſion of ideas muſt appear reprehenſible to every judicious reader.

Thus, Sir, have I gone through your three propoſitions, with alternate feelings of pleaſure and pain, ariſing from the ſingular mixture of piety, wit, error, wiſdom, and paradox, that they exhibit to an attentive obſerver. There is a glare in the whole, that may dazzle the unwary; and this effect it hath produced on a multitude of readers, if I have not been greatly miſinformed. And it is ſurely to be lamented, that, after having ſaid, in one moment, the moſt excellent things in defence of chriſtianity, and *that* alſo in the moſt elegant, original, and affecting manner, you throw out, in another, the ſtrangeſt repreſentations

repreſentations of the ſpirit and genius of that divine religion.

But I haſten to your CONCLUSION, and this ſhall be the ſubject of my laſt letter.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

THE firſt eighteen pages of your CONCLUSION contain an excellent ſummary of, what I would call, the *preſumptive* evidence of the chriſtian religion. You have reduced it to a narrow compaſs;—you have expreſſed it with perſpicuity, warmth, and elegance;—and, if your VIEW had ended here, the candid reader would have riſen from its peruſal, with a lively ſenſation of conviction, that would have made him forget many of the things that ſtaggered him in the preceding parts of your book. But you proceed farther—and, bringing us back into

into the cloudy region of paradox, you loſe the ground you had fairly gained. You reſemble an over-warm general, who, after having won the field, purſues injudiciouſly his enemy on diſadvantageous ground, and is thus expoſed to ſee his laurels wither in a moment, or, at leaſt, loſe much of their bloom. Such is, I fear, your caſe, in ſome of the anſwers you give to the deiſtical objector. You enable a vanquiſhed enemy to return to the combat; you even ſometimes put weapons into his hand; and, though theſe advantages will not enable him to regain the field, they will ſtill keep him ſtickling and ſkirmiſhing, and give him a certain air of conſequence in the eye of the ſuperficial obſerver of things. In plain Engliſh, Sir, your manner of anſwering the objections of unbelievers will often

often tend to multiply the cavils which deiſm draws from incidental objects, and thus perplex the feeble minds of well-meaning chriſtians.

It has been alleged by unbelievers, that, "all revelation from God is in-"credible, becauſe *unneceſſary*, and un-"neceſſary, becauſe the reaſon he be-"ſtowed upon mankind is ſufficiently "able to diſcover all the religious and "moral duties which he requires of "them, if they would but attend to "their precepts, &c.*". Such objectors have been told a thouſand times, that the ſufficiency of that reaſon, of which they boaſt, is owing to the ſtrength it has, in fact, derived from divine revelation. Like the wiſeacre, who thought the ſun uſeleſs, becauſe it ſhines only when we are favoured

* Page 115.

favoured with the *light of the day*, they enjoy many rays both of intellectual and moral knowledge, of which they ſtupidly or perverſely diſavow the principal ſource. But ſince we know from whence they have obtained the principles of their religious knowledge, and know this not by conjecture, but by daily obſervation; ſince we know, that they have learned from their cradles, under chriſtian teachers, both in private and public, the unity of God, the doctrine of repentance, remiſſion, and immortality:——ſince we know, that the doctrines and precepts of chriſtianity have been blended and interwoven with the early growth of their reaſon, and the gradual improvement of their faculties; ſince, I ſay, we know all this, the true way of going to work with the claſs of objectors now under conſideration,

conſideration, is evident and plain: we have only to call upon *them* to prove, that they would have had *day-light*, if there had been no *ſun:* and that they and the body of the people would have acquired a complete knowledge of religious and moral duties, without the goſpel.

It is not poſſible for me to demonſtrate nor even to prove, that a peaſant *cannot* find out the longitude without ſuccour; but, if the peaſant pretends that he is equal to the undertaking, it lies upon him to prove that he is ſo. The caſe is quite parallel to that implied in the objection before us. It is incumbent upon the deiſts to prove, that, without the goſpel they and the various inhabitants of the chriſtian world would have arrived at

the ſame degree of knowledge, both religious and moral, that we this day enjoy.—This they never have proved: this they never *can* prove: and yet, until they prove this, their *objection* to revelation, as incredible, becauſe *unneceſſary*, muſt have no weight, but to demonſtrate their ingratitude and preſumption.

Pardon me, Sir, for rectifying your argument: it was quite neceſſary for the true defence of our common cauſe to take this liberty. For your anſwer to the objection, as it ſtands at preſent, will expoſe you to much cavilling and chicane, nay, to ſome embarraſſment from the quarter of infidelity. When you deſire the objector* "to turn his "eyes to thoſe remote regions of the "globe

* Page 116.

" globe to which ſupernatural aſſiſtance " has never been extended, and tell him " that he will ſee there *men*, endued with " ſenſe and reaſon *not inferior to our own*, " ſo far from being capable of forming " ſyſtems of reaſon and morality, that " they are this day totally unable *to make* " *a nail or a hatchet*;" and when hence you conclude (from *particular* to *univerſal*) " that reaſon alone is neither ſuffi- " cient to offer to mankind a perfect re- " ligion, nor even to lead them to any " degree of civiliſation;" when you thus *premiſe* and thus *conclude*, do you think the objector will be ſilent? No ſuch thing —He will tell you, that it is not true, that theſe men, who are unable to *make a nail or a hatchet*, are endued with ſenſe and reaſon *not inferior* to ours. He will tell you that their ſenſe and reaſon may be

be ſimilar in their nature to ours, though different, greatly different, in their degree *even* of *original* capacity, activity, and penetration, ſince there is an immenſe variety in the works of God, and whole claſſes of the ſame ſpecies may differ from each other in the degrees of original capacity and genius, as individuals are known to do. The deiſt will moreover tell you that, if your reaſoning be good, NEWTON and LA CAILLE muſt have been mathematicians and aſtronomers by divine revelation, ſince the inhabitants of *Otaheite* and *New Zealand*, whoſe *ſenſe* and *reaſon* (in your eſtimation) are *not inferior to theirs*, have never approached the ſimpleſt elements either of mathematics or aſtronomy. There are, certainly, in this our globe, viſible marks of *different* original capacities in different

different nations, which neither chriſtianity, nor repeated attempts towards civiliſation and culture, have been able to remove; and this is too palpable to need any proof.—I don't therefore ſee how, by your manner of ſtating the argument, you can get rid of this reply to your anſwer.

To have urged with ſucceſs the argument in favour of chriſtianity, drawn from the ignorance and errors (in religious matters) of thoſe nations that enjoyed no divine revelation, you ought to have taken a different method. Inſtead of reſting your proof on the ſtate of thoſe barbarous nations who are placed on the very loweſt line in the ſcale of humanity, you ought to have begun by Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the ſeats of learning

and

and arts. You ſay, indeed *, "that hu-
"man reaſon in its higheſt ſtate of cul-
"tivation, among the philoſophers of
"Greece and Rome, was never able to
"form a religion comparable to chriſti-
"anity;" but this is ſaying the thing very feebly:—it is only ſhewing a ſmall part of the truth: it is paſſing rapidly over the moſt glaring facts, that ſhew, with a blaze of evidence, the ineſtimable advantages of the chriſtian religion. You ought to have ſhewn that the progreſs of religious and moral knowledge, in theſe nations, bore no ſort of *proportion* to their improvements in civiliſation, literature, eloquence, and the uſeful and elegant arts of life:—ſo far from it, that the faireſt aſpects of *human* ſcience were degraded by a motley mixture of the moſt

* Page 122.

moſt diſguſting forms of idolatry and ſuperſtition *. You ought to have ſhewn them

* Some writers (ſays Mr. Hume) have been ſurpriſed, that the impieties of *Ariſtophanes* ſhould have been publicly acted and applauded by the Athenians; a people ſo *ſuperſtitious* and ſo jealous of the public religion, that, at that very time, they put Socrates to death for his imagined incredulity. But theſe writers (continues he) conſider not, that the *ludicrous familiar* images, under which the gods are repreſented by that comic poet, inſtead of appearing impious, were the *genuine lights*, in which the ancients conceived their divinities. See HUME's *Nat. Hiſt. of Religion*, 8*vo edit.* 1757.

It is here worthy of obſervation, that there is perhaps no book more adapted to ſhew the unſpeakable advantages of a divine revelation, than this. The accounts we find here of the horrid and ludicrous repreſentations of the deity, that prevailed in the moſt learned nations of the pagan world, are ſo ſtriking, that a thinking mind, anxious

them altars raiſed to the unknown God, ſtatues regarded as endued with divine power, religious ſervices conſecrated to vices in that very city, where Solon gave laws, where Socrates taught philoſophy, where Plato and Xenophon diſplayed the treaſures of their maſter's wiſdom; where Sophocles and Euripides compoſed their tragedies, and where Phidias made the marble breathe life, character, and beauty in their moſt ſublime and graceful forms. Plain fact would have here ſtopped the mouth of the objector, much more

rate

ous about its deſtination, and deſirous of an object of confidence adapted to ſecure its felicity, muſt rejoice in thoſe views of an omnipotent, wiſe, good, and merciful Being, whom chriſtianity exhibits to its faith and improved reaſon, as a protector, a father, and a guide, through life, death, and a boundleſs duration.

effectually than your general and inaccurate aſſertions, that "*reaſon*, even when "*furniſhed with* materials *by ſupernatural* "*aid*, if left to the *guidance of her own* "*wild imaginations* *, falls into more nu- "merous and more groſs errors than her "own native ignorance could have ſug- "geſted;—that ſhe *perſuaded* ſome that "there is no God; others that there *can* "be no future ſtate; that ſhe has taught "ſome that there is *no difference* between "virtue and vice; and that *to cut a man's* "*throat* and *relieve his neceſſities*, are "actions equally meritorious, &c. †" Dear Sir, if ſuch is the character of REASON, and if, as you add, *ſhe can ſhew*, that,

* *The imaginations of reaſon* is a very ſtrange expreſſion.

† Page 120.

that, " there is nothing in any thing," and " prove *by recurring to firſt princi-* " *ples* that there are *no principles* at all," I really think ſhe ought to be burnt for a witch, and that we ſhould give ourſelves over tamely to the *Leviathan*, to tell us, by the potent voice of authority, what is right and what is wrong, in philoſophy and religion, as well as in politics. But you would have done better if you had not confounded *falſe reaſoning*, which alone can lead to all theſe abſurdities, with the faculty of *reaſon*, which is the candle of the Lord in the breaſt of man.

This candle, indeed, had its light obſtructed in the pagan world, by miſts of ignorance; and, more eſpecially, in the article of religion, falſe lights were held

held forth by the paſſions and prejudices of men, and the miſerable inventions of political prieſtcraft.

It is truly ſtrange to ſee ſuch religious non-ſenſe, ſuch childiſh opinions, conſecrated by public authority and private devotion, amidſt ſuch diſplays of genius, activity, and taſte, in the advancement of arts and ſciences. The chriſtian peaſant, who knows that his God is one, eternal, without body, limits, or viſible repreſentation, that he loves order, loves his creatures, will pardon the ſins of the penitent and ſincere, and make them, after this ſtate of paſſage, partakers of happineſs and immortality, knows more of religion, than all the diſciples of Socrates, and has more clear and conſiſtent notions of the Deity than

than Socrates himſelf. If this peaſant, with his preſent portion of knowledge, ſmall as it may be, could be ſuppoſed to have exiſted at Athens, when Epimenides was letting looſe his white and black ſheep at the Areopagus, to direct the Athenians where they ſhould ſacrifice.—Or, when this wiſe Areopagus condemned Stilpo to baniſhment for denying that the Minerva of Phidias was a real god, he would have burſt out into a loud laugh.——All this ſhews, that Athens was the ground you ought to have choſen for your ſtand to repel the objection under conſideration, by ſhewing that progreſs in the ſciences and arts is compatible with the groſſeſt ignorance in religion, and therefore, that the goſpel might be highly advantageous,

tageous, even where natural reaſon was in its greateſt improvement.

But, indeed, *you* could not well make uſe of this ground, nor ſtate the argument in this manner;—for, according to your notion of things, the Athenians were not even philoſophers, hiſtorians, poets, legiſlators, and artiſts, without the ſuccours derived either immediately, or in a more remote manner, from divine revelation. This ſeems to be evidently your opinion, when you aſſert *, that, "though human reaſon is capable "of progreſſion in ſcience, yet the firſt "foundations muſt be laid *by ſupernatu-* "*ral inſtructions.*" This is truly a ſingular aſſertion: *nec Deus interſit, niſi dignus vindice nodus*, is a wiſe maxim, which

* Page 118.

which you ſeem to have entirely forgot. Wants, obſervation, experience, genius, time, occaſion, and circumſtances, are ſufficient to account both for the riſe and progreſs of human ſcience in all periods of the world. It is true, that the chriſtian religion gave occaſion to the improvement of ſome branches of ſcience. When ſuch grand truths, as the *unity* and *eternity* of God, the *remiſſion of ſin by a Mediator*, the *reſurrection* and *immortality* of reaſonable beings, were revealed as *facts*, they naturally excited, in thinking minds, a curioſity to know the foundations, which ſuch facts might have in the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of things. Hence metaphyſical ſcience undoubtedly derived new degrees of improvement and preciſion. The *manner* alſo in which

the divine promiſes, with reſpect to the future deſtination of man, might be accompliſhed, was a natural object of philoſophical enquiry, and thus the goſpel opened to human curioſity large fields of ſpeculation, which have both improved the powers of the mind, and tended to the advancement of moral and metaphyſical ſcience; but it is, nevertheleſs, true, that all human ſciences may have been, nay, were actually cultivated in a certain degree, without the intervention of ſupernatural inſtruction, to which ſource it is impoſſible to trace them with any meaſure of hiſtorical evidence, that is ſatisfactory or ſtriking. You ſay, that there is no reaſon to be aſſigned, why one part of mankind ſhould have made ſuch an amazing progreſs in knowledge, while the other,

formed

formed *with the* SAME *natural capacities*, ſhould remain in a ſtate little ſuperior to the brutes, "except that the firſt have "received divine communications, and "the latter have never yet been favour-"ed with ſuch aſſiſtance*." But it is denied, that the nations which live without government, letters, or laws, have the *ſame natural capacities*, which the others are endowed with, and it will be ever impoſſible to prove that they have. I repeat it again, as there is a ſtriking difference between the *original* genius and capacity of individuals in one nation, ſo there may be, and no doubt is a diverſity of the ſame kind between nations. Every appearance is in favour of this diverſity: repeated obſervation and experience confirm it; ſo that your

* Page 119.

reaſoning is built upon a circumſtance which appears to be falſe, and which you never can prove to be true. This diverſity ſeems to be the poſitive appointment of divine providence: it enters as an eſſential part in that plan of government in which variety of beings, capacities, characters, and talents, reduced to unity of deſign, will be ſeen one day to terminate in univerſal beauty, ſymmetry, and perfection.

So that, Sir, we may account for the diverſity that is viſible in the intellectual and moral ſtate of different nations, for the improvements of ſome in knowledge, policy, legiſlation, and commerce, and the ſavage ſtupidity and ignorance of others, without having any recourſe to the diſtinctions formed by ſupernatural inſtruction,

inſtruction, granted to ſome and not vouchſafed to the reſt. A diverſity of original capacity will ſolve the problem ſufficiently, as far as the phænomenon to be explained relates to human knowledge, and to the arts and ſciences which have for their objects the embelliſhment and improvement of human ſocicty, by ſources of pleaſure, or objects of utility. The caſe with religious knowledge is different:—and therefore, having granted to your deiſt, whom you had brought to Athens, inſtead of Otaheite, that theſe elegant and learned Grecians owed all their improvements to the culture of their reaſon, you might have aſked him, whence, amidſt this improvement of reaſon, proceeded the abſurdity of their theological opinions? He muſt anſwer, —from the *weakneſs* or *abuſe* of reaſon;

for there is no other poſſible anſwer to be given. Granting the *abuſe* of reaſon, revelation muſt be eſteemed at leaſt advantageous;—granting its *weakneſs*, revelation muſt be allowed to be neceſſary; and thus, in both caſes, the objection, now before us, falls to the ground.

I am, however, perſuaded (and here, no doubt, you and I agree) that, with reſpect to a juſt idea of the object of religion, the *weakneſs* of reaſon is as demonſtrable, as the ill uſe that has been made of it. And if a deiſt, acknowledging the abuſe of natural reaſon in the pagan world, which is *a fact*, ſhould, nevertheleſs, inſiſt upon its capacity of arriving, without the aſſiſtance of revelation, at juſt notions of the ſupreme Being, and of religious duty, which is a queſtion

queſtion *of theory*, I would addreſs myſelf to the gentleman, in pretty much the following terms :

I ſee reaſon making great improvements in human ſcience, whoſe objects are, in a certain degree within our reach as viſible, or tangible, or knowable by obſervation, conſciouſneſs, or experience. The mind, poſſeſſed of leiſure, may derive, from the contemplation of theſe objects, ſucceſſive diſcoveries of their properties, connexions, and influence, and thus the maſs of intellectual acquiſitions may be going on towards the formation of a ſyſtem. But as to divine knowledge or the knowledge of the ſupreme Being, in his nature and perfections, as he is in himſelf, and in his relation to us, and his deſigns with reſpect

to our preſent ſtate and future deſtination, the caſe is ſomewhat different. This great Being is not the direct object of any faculty of perception, nor does he reſemble any thing that is ſo. Men might have riſen to ſome notion of ſuperior power from the ſyſtem of nature both phyſical and moral; but whether this power was lodged in one being, or in many, was not ſo eaſily to be aſcertained, and ſtill more does it appear beyond the reach of unaſſiſted reaſon to ſtretch its conception to the nature and qualities of an abſolutely perfect mind. Pure ſpirituality, omniſcience, omnipreſence, and omnipotence, and their aſtoniſhing ſource, neceſſary exiſtence, are not commenſurate to the human faculties. Samples of wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, exhibited in the works of nature,

ture, and in the courſe of events, lead men to attribute theſe qualities to the Author of nature; but the various and contrary events of life, the mixture of evil with good in this imperfect ſtate, gave riſe, through human ignorance and error, to motley ſyſtems of polytheiſm and idolatry. Though the order and frame of the univerſe, when accurately examined, afford an argument that ought to lead a rational mind to the pure principles of natural religion, and carry it through the vaſt interval which is interpoſed between the divine and human nature, yet they did not produce this effect in the moſt enlightened nations of paganiſm: and this ſhews that ſupernatural inſtruction was *neceſſary* to ſhew us *what God is*, what he *requires*

of us this for the preſent, and what are his *deſigns* with reſpect to our future condition in the univerſe.

But when we talk of the chriſtian revelation as *neceſſary*, we mean by this, that it is a diſpenſation of divine wiſdom, without which *we* would not have enjoyed that meaſure of knowledge with which we are actually bleſſed, thoſe guides to that duty that direct our conduct, nor thoſe views of futurity that purify, conſole, and enable the mind. The end of Chriſt's miſſion was to raiſe *one part* of the human race to a high and diſtinguiſhed degree of perfection and felicity. But it was not the deſign of the Deity to raiſe *all* mankind to this degree, any more than it was his intention

tion that all men ſhould become *philoſophers*. The fact proves this demonſtrably: the nations that have not been viſited by the goſpel, and the generations that have paſſed through this ſtage of humanity before the light of the goſpel aroſe on the world, had *their* ſpheres and *their* deſtination unknown to us; they were leſs favoured than the chriſtian, as the chriſtian is leſs perfect than the angels, and the angels than the ſeraphims. But was the deity to create no order of beings but ſeraphims? Chriſtianity ſeems not to have been *neceſſary*, becauſe not adapted to the *ſphere* of the Hottentot, nor even to other nations leſs uncultivated and barbarous. But it was neceſſary to moral improvement and ſaving knowledge

knowledge in that ſphere of beings to which it has been vouchſafed, and thoſe, who ſhut voluntarily their eyes on its divine luſtre, will be called to an account, which will not be required from thoſe that are placed lower in the ſcale of being. Different ſpheres of beings and degrees of perfection were (as it would ſeem and as has been already obſerved) neceſſary to the order and perfection of the univerſal ſyſtem; but in every ſphere which enters into that ſyſtem, the lot of the *individual* muſt be determined by the *means* he has enjoyed and his *improvement* or *neglect* of them. This will, one day, leave the children of infidelity under the light of the goſpel, without excuſe, and it is to be feared, without conſolation,

while

while *wiſdom will be juſtified of* HER children, by their faith and hope in this temporary ſtate of trial, and by their approaching removal to a nobler ſcene of activity and enjoyment.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

THOUGH there are ſeveral things exceptionable in your anſwers to other deiſtical objections, which have been propoſed and refuted times without number, yet I ſhall here curb the ſpirit of criticiſm; for to have been ſo long ſcuffling in polemics is a thing very foreign to my turn of mind. It was my principal intention, in theſe letters, to conſider, what you had advanced with reſpect to the *internal evidence* of chriſtianity. You have already my ſentiments on that ſubject delivered with frankneſs and candour.

I cannot, however, take my leave of you, Sir, without a few remarks on your manner

manner of anſwering the ſecond and fifth objections brought by the deiſts againſt the divine origin and authority of the goſpel.

My reaſon for this is, that the manner in which you anſwer the one, diminiſhes the weight of *moral* evidence; and the principle, on which you repel the other, is ſubverſive, I fear, of *all* evidence whatever.

The firſt of theſe objections is derived from the ſuppoſed errors, variations and contradictions, that are to be found in the books of the Old and New Teſtament.—There are few objections againſt chriſtianity, that have been anſwered in a more ſatisfactory manner than this has been; and you have alleged ſeveral judicious

judicious conſiderations to deſtroy its force, particularly, with reſpect to thoſe philoſophical errors that have been admitted into common converſation in conſequence of popular opinion, and which muſt be always adopted in a language that is addreſſed to the generality of mankind. As to the variations and contradictions that have been charged upon the ſacred writers, they have been diſingenuouſly exaggerated from the quarter of infidelity; ſuch, however, as they are, they are ſufficient to make the apologiſts for chriſtianity more prudent and circumſpect in determining the extent of divine inſpiration, than they have generally been; and the learned and judicious Dr. Watſon has exhibited a laudable example of this circumſpection in his maſterly anſwer to Mr. Gibbons. He has

has ſtruck wiſely into the middle path; but, I fear, Sir, that you have run into an extreme on this delicate ſubject, or, at leaſt, gone farther than is neceſſary, to avoid the inconveniencies that attend the hypotheſis of certain doctors, with reſpect to the inſpiration of the ſacred writers. You maintain, that "the truth "of a revelation is not affected by the "fallibility of thoſe who wrote its hiſ-"tory *." But this aſſertion cannot be admitted as a general principle: its truth depends upon the *degree* of fallibility in the hiſtorian, and upon the objects to which it extends: becauſe, however *true* a revelation may be in itſelf, i. e. with reſpect to the perſons who have immediately received it, it cannot be *true*, with reſpect

* Page 123.

reſpect to you and me, or, in other words, we cannot be *perſuaded* of its truth, but by our conviction of the accuracy and fidelity of thoſe who relate it; and this accuracy and fidelity cannot be fully aſcertained, but by ſuch a ſuperintendent inſpiration, at leaſt, as ſecures the hiſtorian againſt all *eſſential* error. You affirm, that the truth of a revelation (i. e. the certainty of its divine origin) depends upon the internal evidence of its own ſupernatural excellence; this point, I hope, has been already ſufficiently diſcuſſed in the preceding letters. But you go ſtill farther, and boldly affirm, that this internal evidence in favour of chriſtianity would not be diminiſhed, even on the ſuppoſition, "that "all the prophecies were only *fortunate* "*gueſſes* or *artful applications*, all the miracles

" miracles of the goſpel legendary tales,
" (i. e. lyes) and all the books of ſcrip-
" ture, inſtead of being written by their
" pretended authors, poſterior impoſi-
" tions on illiterate and credulous ages*."
What! Sir, could perſons, notorious for lying and forgery, have been really cloathed with a divine miſſion? Beſides, had the books of ſcripture been forged in later ages, and their authors been capable of fraud and fiction, the morality of the goſpel, alone, could have pretended to the characters of a revelation on account of its intrinſic beauty and excellence; but all the accounts of Jeſus ſuffering, dying, and exalted, all the promiſes and facts, recorded in the goſpel, muſt have been ſuſpected as falſe and fabulous;

* Page 131.

fabulous; and what, then, would your internal evidence prove? You inſiſt again, "that a religion ſuperior to all human "imagination actually exiſts, and its in-"trinſical excellence is a proof of its "divine origin, by whatever means it "was introduced, or with whatever er-"rors it was blended *:" I muſt alſo beg leave to tell you again, that this religion conſiſts of *facts*, as well as *precepts*; that the facts are aſcertained by *veracity*, as the precepts are recommended by their intrinſic excellence, and the new authority they derive from the truth of the facts, which declare Chriſt to have been the Son of God; and that your proof of the divine origin of chriſtianity is applicable to its precepts alone. If the facts are

* Page 132, 133.

are fabulous, the precepts may be excellent, but they cannot come recommended by a ſupernatural commiſſion.

When you ſay, that, "if the ſtory of "Chriſt's temptation, and ſeveral other "narrations of the New Teſtament "were pious frauds, this would not af-"fect the excellence of chriſtianity, nor "the authority of its founder *;" you ſay the moſt imprudent thing imaginable: for, if one miracle, poſitively related, be falſe, by what criterion will you convince us, that the others are true? If the evangeliſts tell us ſtories, when they ſay, that Chriſt caſt (or cured men of) dæmons, what ſecurity have we for their having ſpoken the truth, when they tell us, that he aroſe from

* Page 125.

from the dead? Now, if Chriſt did not riſe from the dead, whatever the excellence of his doctrine or precepts may be, *our faith is vain*, (i. e. without a foundation). S. Paul has declared this in expreſs terms:—he reſts the truth of chriſtianity on this ſingle fact.—But on your hypotheſis (whoſe conſequences certainly you did not attend to) this fact might be falſe, and yet chriſtianity might be true;—I did not think that there was *ſuch great faith as this* in all England.

Your anſwer, Sir, to the fifth objection is ſtill more reprehenſible, than the conceſſions you make in your reply to the ſecond; becauſe, as I have ſaid above, and mean now to prove, it ſtrikes at the foundation of *all* evidence whatever. This objection againſt the divine

authority

authority of the goſpel is, as you ſtate it, founded upon * "the incredibility "of ſome of its doctrines, particularly "thoſe of the Trinity and atonement "for ſin by the ſufferings of Chriſt, the "one *contradicting* all the principles of "human reaſon, and the other all our "ideas of divine juſtice." If one of theſe doctrines *contradicts* all the principles of human reaſon, and the other, all our ideas of divine juſtice, it is as impoſſible for us to believe them, in our character of reaſonable beings, as it is to believe, that twice two makes five, or that an action may be juſt and unjuſt at the ſame time and in the ſame circumſtances; for every propoſition, that evidently *contradicts* the principles of reaſon,

* Page 159.

ſon, is equivalent to the two now mentioned. You don't ſeem, Sir, to have apprehended this, when you expreſs yourſelf in the following manner: "That *three* beings ſhould be *one* is a "propoſition which certainly contradicts "reaſon, that is, *our* reaſon; but it "does not from thence follow, that it "cannot be true *." No, really? How in the name of wonder can it be poſſibly true, that *three* beings may be *one* being, if the term *being* bears the ſame ſenſe in the ſubject and attribute of this propoſition? Three beings can never be one being, but on the ſuppoſition that *one* ſignifies *three*, if the term being keeps its meaning: and, if you ſhift the meaning of the term, you only quibble,

* Page 160.

ble, and make merry with your readers. If the propoſition, in queſtion, be true to any intelligence in the univerſe, without changing the ideas attached to the terms, a thing *may be* and *not be* at the ſame time, and thus that great and fundamental axiom, that is the root of all truth and all evidence, is plucked up at once, to the great conſolation of the ſceptical tribe, and the eternal confuſion of all ideas and all knowledge. If you had been contented with ſaying, that a propoſition may ſurpaſs the comprehenſion of our reaſoning or judging faculties, and yet be true, you would have ſaid what every one muſt allow. In ſuch a caſe, the terms of the propoſition convey to us no ideas, or confuſed ideas, becauſe the clear ideas, that might be annexed to them by ſuperior beings,

are not commenſurate to *our* faculties of perception; and, as we are thus incapable of underſtanding the terms of the propoſition, we cannot judge of their connexion or diſagreement as *ſubject* and *attribute*.—But when it is affirmed, that a propoſition *contradicts* reaſon, or (if you pleaſe) *our* reaſon, it is ſuppoſed evidently, that the terms of the propoſition are underſtood, the ideas they convey perceived, otherwiſe we could not decide, whether they contradicted our reaſon or not. Now, in ſuch a caſe, theſe terms cannot contradict our reaſon, but by contradicting each other; and, when this happens, the propoſition is falſe in the nature of things. It is not, Sir, for your ſatisfaction, but for that of ſuch grown gentlemen and ladies as may look into theſe letters, without any

previous

previous knowledge of logical diſcuſſions, that I ſhall illuſtrate this reaſoning by a familiar example. Suppoſe a man ſhould utter this ſentence, *a* SQUARE *figure is a* CIRCLE: this propoſition does not ſurpaſs my reaſon, but contradicts it; that is, the idea of a *ſquare* deſtroys the idea of a *circle*, and, on the other hand, the idea of a *circle* deſtroys that of a *ſquare*, and therefore the propoſition, being affirmative, is falſe in the nature of things, or, in other words, by the clear perception I have of the unchangeable nature and properties of theſe two figures. And, indeed, Sir, when we ſay, that a propoſition contradicts reaſon, we neither mean by this term *our* reaſon, nor the reaſon of any other being, but the nature of things. It is in this ſenſe that *reaſon* is always taken in

ſuch propoſitions; and in this ſenſe of the term there is but ONE *reaſon* in the univerſe, as there is but ONE *truth*, ONE *juſtice*, ONE *moral goodneſs*, and ſo on.

What I have ſaid here, concerning the contradictory terms of one propoſition, is equally true, with reſpect to two contradictory propoſitions, of which by the unchangeable rules of right reaſoning *one* always muſt be true and the *other falſe*. This conſideration will ever prevent rational divines (a claſs of men whom the deiſts treat often rudely for reaſons eaſily to be gueſſed) from defending the doctrine of the holy Trinity upon this erroneous principle, "that "*what* is *contradictory* to *our* reaſon may "be *true* nevertheleſs." The ſcripture no-where ſays, that *there are three Gods*; if

if it did, there would be a palpable contradiction in theſe divine oracles, which ſo often declare that there *is but one.* It is in conformity, therefore, with this unchangeable principle, even unity of eſſence in the Deity, that we muſt underſtand all the paſſages, where the term *God* is attributed expreſsly or virtually to the Son and to the Holy Ghoſt. But chiefly it will ever be the care of modeſt wiſdom to avoid *all* explication of a doctrine ſo profound, and whoſe terms convey ideas entirely beyond our conception. It is only, *then*, that this doctrine contradicts reaſon, when it is preſumptuouſly explained, as if the terms and ideas, it comprehends, were commenſurate to our capacity. When the interpreters of ſcripture have ſaid, that there muſt be a *certain union* between Father,

Son, and Holy Ghoſt, which lays a foundation for aſcribing to the two latter the names, titles, attributes, and works, which are elſewhere appropriated to the *one* only true God, they have ſaid all that *can* be offered upon the ſubject, and all farther diſquiſitions,—whether metaphyſical or philological, relating to it, muſt always end in froth. Such reſearches are no more than loſs of time, which would be better employed in the improvement of *uſeful* knowledge, and the advancement of practical religion. The belief of ſuch an union between Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt is not contradictory to reaſon, becauſe there is no axiom or tenet in philoſophy, no doctrine of ſcripture, which are incompatible with its exiſtence. But the belief of the *manner* of this union or its *nature* is impoſſible, becauſe

becauſe we have no terms that can expreſs it with accuracy, nor has the ſcripture given us one ſingle ray of light in this matter. Its author knew too well the limits of human underſtanding to ſpeak of ſounds to the deaf, or of colours to the blind.—But certain doctors have audaciouſly attempted to explain—what the inſpired writers conſidered as beyond the extent of their commiſſion, and you ſeem to know, Sir, very well, what the cauſe and ſpirit of religion have ſuffered by the controverſies which their ſpeculations have excited in the chriſtian world.

Accordingly you diſtinguiſh wiſely, with reſpect to a Trinity in the divine nature, between the *fact* and the *manner*. Yet, I rather wiſh, Sir, you had not

ſaid, that " the union of three beings in " the divine eſſence is a propoſition as " plain, as that *three equilateral* LINES " *compoſe one triangle* *;" for here you begin to explain; ſince, however you had a mind to explain, you ſhould rather have ſaid, that, THREE *equilateral triangles* (and not *lines) compoſe* ONE *triangle*; as nothing leſs will ſatisfy thoſe who take their explications of this doctrine from a certain oracle. It is true, that, by this, you would have illuſtrated the myſtery in queſtion, by a contradiction in terms; but there are many *good* people, who would have taken leſs offence at this, than they muſt neceſſarily do, when they ſee you falling perpendicularly into ſomething like, or rather worſe

* Page 167, 168.

worſe than *Sabellianiſm.* Here, indeed, you fall, when you explain the ſacred *tri-union* by the ſimilitude of *three* equilateral (I ſuppoſe you mean *equal)* lines compoſing *one* triangle, for here each line is not a triangle, neither has it any of the properties of a triangle; whereas, in the Trinity, each perſon has the properties of Deity.—You ſpeak, Sir, more modeſtly, and, I will venture to ſay, more philoſophically on this ſtupendous ſubject, when you ſay, "that we cannot comprehend how far diſtinct beings, whoſe mode of exiſtence bears no relation to time or ſpace, may be united, and therefore we cannot deny ſuch union, though it muſt appear extremely embarraſſing to thoſe, who imagine, that all beings muſt exiſt in time and ſpace, as we do." This is

true with reſpect to the doctrine of the Trinity, and it ſhews, that we ſhould not enter into any reſearches concerning the ineffable union: but it does not ſhew that ſuch an union *contradicts* reaſon, nor that a propoſition, which contradicts reaſon, *may* be *true.*

Nevertheleſs, you allege examples to prove this paradox; and theſe I am almoſt tempted to paſs over in ſilence, ſince it muſt have ſurely been in an unguarded moment of lively fancy, that you made uſe of the three following,—*the being of a God—over-ruling grace and free-will—certain fore-knowledge of future events, and the uncertain contingency of theſe events:* theſe, ſay you, are to our apprehenſions *abſolute contradictions*, and "yet the truth of every "one

" one of them is demonſtrable from ſcrip-
" ture, *reaſon*, and experience." It is paſſing ſtrange that a propoſition, which is an *abſolute contradiction* to our apprehenſions, ſhould be at the ſame time *demonſtrable* by *our* reaſon; though it may happen, indeed, that a propoſition may be demonſtrated to contain a fact, the manner of whoſe exiſtence is (not contradictory, but) incomprehenſible; for I repeat it again, of all contradictory ideas and propoſitions, the one is true, and the other muſt be falſe, or, in other words a contradiction in terms is a non-entity.

Your manner of proving, that the being of a God contradicts our reaſon is totally inconcluſive: " that any *thing*, ſay " you, ſhould exiſt without a cauſe,— " or that any thing ſhould be the cauſe " of

" of its own exiſtence, are propoſitions " equally contradictory to our reaſon, " yet one of them muſt be true or no- " thing could have ever exiſted." If, in the firſt of thoſe propoſitions, by the *thing*, you mean an *effect*, (or created being) which is properly correlative to the word *cauſe*, the propoſition, indeed, implies a contradiction, but it has no relation to the exiſtence of God, who is neither an *effect* nor a created being; and, if in the place of the word thing, you put the word being, the contradiction vaniſhes, however the fact may ſurpaſs our comprehenſion. That a being ſhould exiſt without a cauſe, is ſo far from implying a contradiction, that it is rather a manifeſt contradiction to our reaſon, that ſuch an uncauſed being ſhould not exiſt. For, ſince no *thing* (or in other words, no effect or finite being) can

can exiſt without a cauſe; and, ſince the whole univerſe is compoſed of effects or finite beings, there muſt of neceſſity exiſt a being, on whom the *whole* depends: and, if *all* depends on him, he, himſelf muſt be *independent*, and conſequently uncauſed.—

As to *over-ruling grace* and *free-will*, however impoſſible it may be for us to find out the link that unites the action of the one with the exiſtence of the other, there is one conſideration that diſpels all appearance of contradiction between them; and that is, that divine grace ever acts by a rational influence, by rational motives, and is ever attended by a ſpontaneous concurrence and voluntary determination, in which the very eſſence of liberty conſiſts. With reſpect

reſpect to the contradiction between fore-knowledge of future events, and what you (very improperly) call the *uncertain* contingency of theſe events, I ſhall only obſerve, that contingency is not oppoſed to *certainty*, but to fatal, phyſical, and unchangeable neceſſity; hence it follows, that events may be *certain* as to their arrival, though contingent in their nature: and certainty is a ſufficient foundation for fore-knowledge. This diſtinction does not, indeed, either remove or even much diminiſh the obſcurity of the ſubject; yet, if I am not miſtaken, it renders the contradiction, you ſpeak of, rather apparent than real. I know there are philoſophers, and even divines, whoſe hypotheſis tends to deprive you of this example, by denying the fore-knowledge of free actions and future contingencies.

gencies. They maintain, that it is no more a defect in preſcience not to foreſee future contingencies, than it is a defect in omnipotence not to be able to do what is impoſſible—they embrace your opinion with reſpect to the contradiction; but they draw from it a concluſion different from yours, and be it ſaid without offence, a more conſiſtent one. But, for my part, I cannot admit the principle. In the preſcience of future contingencies I ſee a *Gordian knot*, rather than a contradiction; and, inſtead of cutting it with temerity, like the philoſophers now mentioned, I ſhall wait with patience, until it ſhall pleaſe the divine wiſdom to untie it in his own good time.

As to the doctrine of Chriſt's ſuffering for ſin, (which is the ſecond thing mentioned

tioned in the objection now before us) the deiſt affirms, that it *contradicts* all our ideas of divine juſtice, and this you acknowledge and deny alternately more than once, in the compaſs of a few pages. "Reaſon, *ſay yôu*, *, informs us that the "puniſhment of the innocent, inſtead of "the guilty, is *diametrically* oppoſite to "juſtice, rectitude, and all pretenſions to "utility †." And yet you tell us in the following ſentence, "that the ſhort line "of reaſon cannot reach to the bottom "of this queſtion," and a little farther on, that "a tax, if voluntarily offered, "may be *juſtly* accepted ‡ from the in-"nocent

* Page 162.

† This propoſition is only true, when the innocent is obliged by force, and *againſt his will*, to undergo *external* puniſhment for the guilty.

‡ Page 163.

" nocent inſtead of the guilty, for any " thing that reaſon can decide to the " contrary * !" again, you allege in favour of Chriſt's mediation, " that all nations " civiliſed and barbarous, however dif- " fering in their religious opinions, agreed " in the expediency of appeaſing the " Deity by *vicarious ſufferings* †: you " add, indeed that this notion could ne- " ver have been derived from reaſon, be- " cauſe it *contradicts* it ‡;" and yet you had ſaid a moment before, that our ignorance of circumſtances is ſuch, that " reaſon cannot enable us to aſſert that " this meaſure, (i. e. *vicarious ſufferings*) " is contrary to juſtice, or void of uti- " lity §"—You ſay again, in anſwer to your

* P. 164. † P. 165. ‡ 164. § P. 164.

your deiſt, that "the notion of *vicari-*
"*ous ſufferings* muſt either be derived
"from *natural inſtinct* or from *ſuperna-*
"*tural revelation* *." But to derive it from the latter is to ſuppoſe what is in diſpute, by attributing to revelation the very thing which the deiſt employs as an argument againſt revelation: and if you ſay, that it comes from natural inſtinct, it is ſingular, that this inſtinct, which you call the operation of divine power, ſhould dictate what reaſon, the gift of God, diſavows †. What confuſion and inconſiſtency in this whole diſquiſition!

Inſtead

* Page 166.

† Beſides, by allowing that the notion of vicarious ſufferings may have come from *natural inſtinct*, Mr. Jenyns invalidates his ſecond propoſition,

Inſtead of granting to the objector, that the *vicarious ſufferings* of Chriſt *contradict* all our ideas of divine juſtice, you might have ſhewn him, Sir, (as the excellent Biſhop Butler * has done, with an uncommon ſtrength of reaſoning and a truly philoſophical ſpirit) that theſe ſufferings are analogous to the daily courſe of divine providence in the government of the world, in which the innocent are appointed to ſuffer, in a thouſand caſes, for the faults of the guilty †. Why this appointment has taken place, we cannot yet

ſition, that *the doctrines of chriſtianity (among which* he gives a diſtinguiſhed rank to that of vicarious atonement) *are totally unlike every thing which had ever before entered into the mind of man.*

* See his *Analogy*, &c. part II. ch. v.

† The objection, had it any force, would be ſtronger in one reſpect, againſt *natural providence*, than

yet ſee *fully*; though a cloſe obſerver of men and things will perceive many advantages ariſing from it in the courſe of providence. In the diſpenſation of grace, beſides its tendency to vindicate the authority of the divine government, and deter God's creatures from Sin, it may be founded on many other reaſons, and attended with farther efficacy, at preſent unknown to us, and which will appear in the proper time. But, to vindicate the divine rectitude and juſtice both in the courſe of providence, and in the diſpenſation of grace, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that, finally and upon the whole,

than againſt the *chriſtian diſpenſation:* becauſe, under the *former*, we are, in many caſes, neceſſitated, whether we will or no, to ſuffer for the faults of others, whereas the ſufferings of Chriſt were voluntary. *Id. ibid.*

whole, *every one* ſhall receive according to *his* perſonal character and conduct. The general doctrine of ſcripture declares that this *final* and juſtly proportioned diſtribution ſhall be the *completion* of God's government; but, during the progreſs of this government in nature and grace, and in order to the completion of the whole ſcheme, *vicarious ſufferings* may be fit and neceſſary, and this is enough to ſilence your objector.

We ſee but *in part* here below, both in the government of nature, and in the diſpenſation of grace. Chriſtianity, more eſpecially, is a *ſcheme* of divine wiſdom, that relates to eternity, and points thither for its completion. It is therefore only in a future ſcene that we can hope to ſee clearly the nature of each part and the harmony

harmony of the whole. What is plain, comfortable, and practical in this divine ſyſtem is deſigned to occupy us *here*; what is myſterious, at preſent, will nobly exerciſe our enlarged faculties and powers *hereafter*.

THE END.

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